

Consultation Update – Feedback on the FRC

The location and layout of key road junctions for the Forth Replacement Crossing has been finalised this month, following further design development work and consultation with the public and stakeholders.

More than 2,200 people attended exhibitions at a range of venues in Fife, Edinburgh and West Lothian in January and Transport Scotland received just over 200 responses to the consultation. The feedback is currently being reviewed and, as a priority, comments relating to the key road junctions have been factored into the design process to finalise the location and geometry of the junctions for South and North Queensferry. These have also been discussed with representatives of the towns' community councils and local authorities.

The details of the design developments are as follows:

South Queensferry Junction

On the south side of the Forth, new south and north-bound slip roads to and from the Forth Road Bridge and A90 at South Queensferry have been added to the design for use by buses and public transport. This provides more direct connections onto the trunk road network for public transport, effectively extending the dedicated public transport corridor.

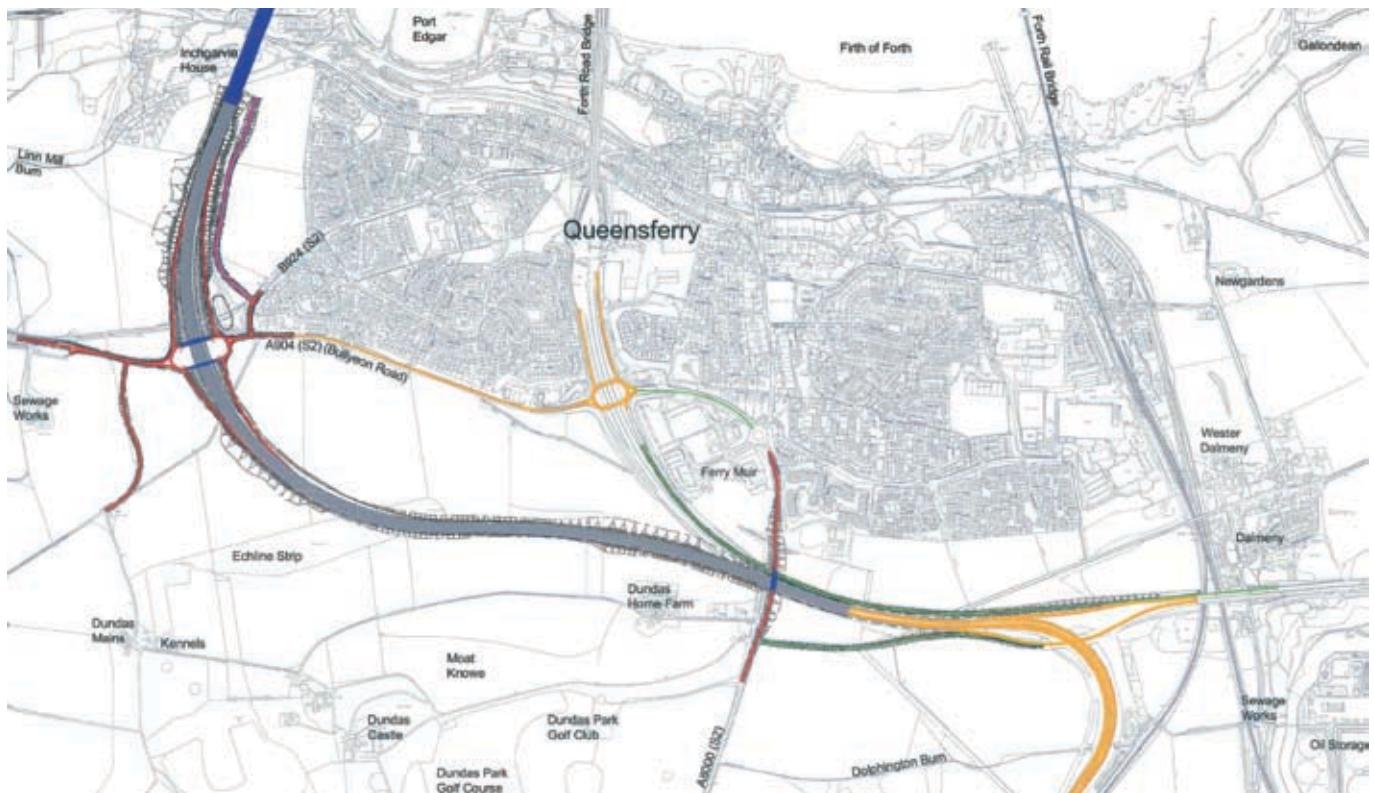
The provision of new slip roads allows the connection to South Queensferry to be moved west, providing direct access to and from the A904 immediately south of the replacement crossing. The A90 will remain in cutting below the level of the A904 as indicated in the earlier design, with a new roundabout positioned at ground level connecting to the A904.

The new design provides significantly improved public transport priority and more convenient connections onto the trunk road network, reduces

traffic using the A904 Buiyleon Road and, crucially, allows the embankment carrying the road south of South Queensferry to be reduced by up to 6m, lessening the visual impact on the town.

Project director for the Forth Replacement Crossing, John Howison said, "Feedback from the community in South Queensferry highlighted concerns about the visual impact of the road embankment and a desire to move the junction to another location to reduce traffic levels on Buiyleon Road and provide more direct bus access. I'm pleased that we have been able to develop a solution which achieves this. By moving the junction west we are able to engineer a solution which involves a substantially lower embankment and at the same time provides more direct access onto the trunk road network for the majority of local traffic."

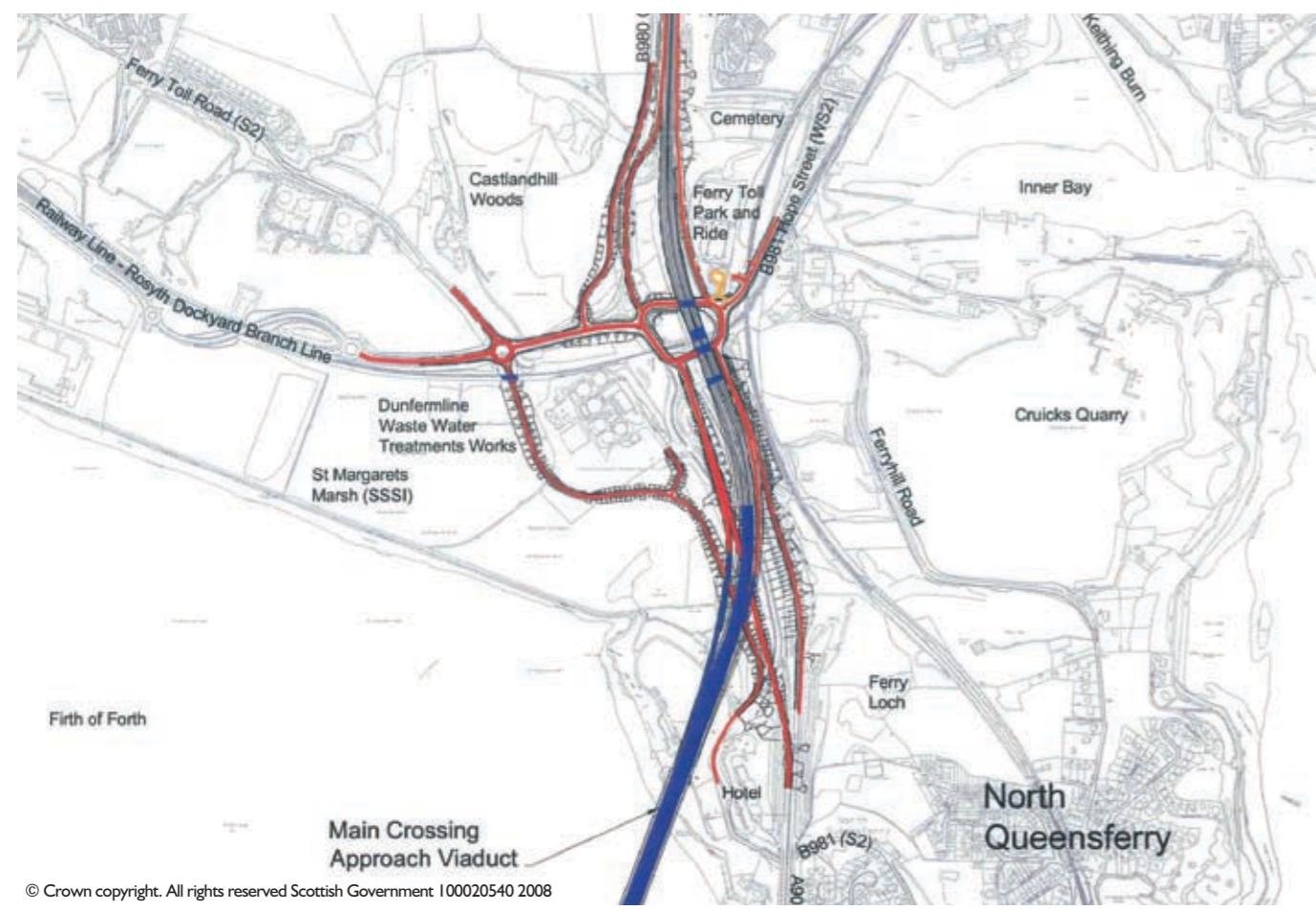
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North Queensferry Junction

At North Queensferry, the proposal is to realign the B981 to connect directly onto the Ferrytoll Road. This provides a more reliable, simpler and safer access for local traffic travelling to and from North Queensferry both during and after construction of the crossing.

At the same time a dedicated north-bound slip road from the Ferrytoll roundabout onto the A90 has been added to the design. Castlandhill Road will be realigned and kept separate from the junction, giving local access to Rosyth from North Queensferry.



Development Process

The connecting roads strategy has been one of the major pieces of work undertaken by the Forth Replacement Crossing team during 2008 and the early part of 2009 and the selected design is the result of a lengthy development process.

Indicative designs were widely publicised through leaflets, briefings and exhibitions during December and January at which Transport Scotland sought feedback on how the scheme should be further developed. More than 200 responses to that consultation were received and are being analysed by the team. This feedback and subsequent discussions with community councils and the local authorities has directly contributed to the development of the junctions.

John Howison explains, "North of the Forth, the interaction between the local and strategic road network in Ferrytoll makes this a complex junction to design. As the main route in and out of North Queensferry, maintaining good access via the B981 is obviously of paramount importance to the community both during and after construction and we believe that the new junction arrangement provides a safer, easier route for local traffic."

Maps of the proposed junctions shown here are available to download from the Forth Replacement Crossing website – www.forthreplacementcrossing.info

Current Project Activities

Ground & Marine Investigations - May

The next round of ground and marine investigations for the Forth Replacement Crossing is scheduled to start in early May. Final preparations for the investigations, which will take place on land and in the Forth estuary, are currently being made.

The marine investigations will provide more information about the seabed conditions in the areas around the bridge's proposed North and South towers which is required to help plan the construction methodology and the equipment required. The majority of the work, which is expected to take three to four weeks, will focus on testing the upper seabed sediments and will use a technique which probes the sediment up to a distance of some 20 metres below seabed to measure the soil strength.

Glover Site Investigations Ltd, who carried out the 2008 marine investigations on the project, will undertake the work from a vessel in the Forth. Two additional rotary drilled boreholes and three trial pits will be dug on the south foreshore near the Port Edgar Barracks sea wall to supplement the findings in that area. These foreshore works will be carried out by BAM Ritches during periods of low tide.

Paul Mellon, Transport Scotland's geotechnical manager for the FRC, said, "Last year we carried out marine investigations to establish the deep ground conditions in the estuary, which involved boring rock up to 90 metres deep in some cases. The vast majority of works planned for May are quite different to this and involve testing softer alluvial soils. The works are less intensive, quieter and quicker to complete and will not require any night-time working."

At the same time a second phase of land-based ground investigations are planned to start in May and last up to 10 weeks. These tests will be carried out on land where the new network connections are planned to be built and in locations on the current road network. This includes works to establish the condition of the existing roads



on the A90 in the north and south, A8000, M9 spur and M9. These works will be carried out by experienced contractors Norwest Holst Ltd on the north side of the Forth and BAM Ritches in the south and will require traffic management in some areas.

Transport Scotland and its representatives are currently liaising with the local authorities, roads operators and landowners where access to their land is required and are grateful for their continued cooperation.



Environmental Impact Assessment

While the forthcoming ground and marine investigations are a very visible sign of the works in situ to progress the crossing, behind the scenes staff are working intensively on a wide range of activities

The final set of environmental surveys monitoring estuarine birds along the Forth shoreline, are now drawing to a close. The findings from these surveys will be added to the large volume of data gathered as part of the environmental impact assessment over the last year, which covers not only wildlife, flora and fauna, but also impacts on people and property, noise and air quality, community amenity, access for pedestrians and cyclists and landscape and visual impacts.

The findings and recommended mitigation will be reported in a detailed Environmental Statement which is currently being produced by the environmental team and will be published to support the Bill when it is lodged to Parliament.

"The exhibitions were a very useful part of our rolling consultation programme," says John Howison. "We would like to thank all those who took the time to send in their views. We regret that we cannot provide personal replies to the feedback submitted but would like to assure people that each submission is being carefully reviewed by our team and their issues considered as work continues on the such things as environmental mitigation, landscaping and the construction process. Members of the Forth Replacement Crossing team are continuing to meet with landowners, community groups and statutory bodies as we develop these aspects of the scheme."

A formal report documenting the public consultation feedback is currently being prepared and will be published shortly.

Current Project Activities (continued)

Bridge Design

The team continues to develop the specimen design of the cable-stayed bridge and will shortly commission wind tunnel testing to determine the aerodynamic behaviour of the bridge.

The tests will also provide vital information to establish the optimum design of the all-important windshielding on the crossing.

Landowner & Community Liaison

The FRC team continues to meet with landowners along the route of the crossing and has now been in discussions with potentially affected landowners for more than a year. Current discussions include agreeing the accommodation works for landowners, including making arrangements for alternative accesses and replacement boundary fencing, for example, which will be required when construction gets underway.

Preparing for Construction

The project has now reached a stage where preparations need to be made to secure contractors to build the crossing. In March Transport Scotland hosted a conference attended by around 130 delegates from 60 different firms to brief them on the project and to allow them to prepare for the tender process.

Over the summer a Code of Construction Practice will be developed in consultation with the relevant authorities and community organisations to ensure the successful contractor carries out the works with due regard for the impact on communities and the environment.

Transport Scotland's project manager, Lawrence Shackman said, "The planning and detailed work that goes on behind the scenes to develop a piece of infrastructure on this scale is vast."

Contacting the Forth Replacement Crossing

For more information about the Forth Replacement Crossing please contact the Transport Scotland team on:

Phone: 0141 272 7578

Email: frcenquiries@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.forthreplacementcrossing.info

You can also sign up to our regular e-newsletter on the website to receive updates on the project by email.



The team is also in touch with residents associations and community councils and continues to meet with those groups on a regular basis to gain further feedback from the exhibitions and to feed their comments into the design. New visual aids including landscape plans and a virtual reality computer simulation are being developed to help the public see how the scheme will look in situ.

At any one time a large number of staff from Transport Scotland, JacobsArup and a range of other specialists are working on the various strands of the project, ranging from road design and engineering to transport planning, environmental surveys and assessment, and landowner and public liaison.

"We appreciate news of our progress is keenly anticipated by public and we intend to make information available as it is ready throughout 2009 via leaflets, newsletters, the web and further displays and exhibitions."



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