HIGHWAYS

Shetland’s inner relief road could arrive early - if a price can be agreed - By Robert Bond

Work to start on relief road

Work is due to begin on the next leg of Shetland’s inner relief road in October - two years earlier than first planned - but could be held up until the new year if the council and contractor Birse fail to agree a maximum price.

The council has begun land assembly and highways alteration for the scheme after the Government approved side roads and compulsory purchase orders following a December public inquiry. Although about 60% of the route is based on existing highway, 40 properties will be demolished to make way for the road which is designed to help regenerate the city centre.

The council is in line for a £0.5M reward for meeting a public service agreement target to speed up the CPO process. Under its early contractor in volvement (ECI) contract, believed to be the first of its kind with a local authority, Birse has been acting as fee-paid consultant since last May working with council engineers on the design, traffic management and utilities planning as well as construction methods, value engineering and risk management.

But it will only win the two and a half year construction contract, currently put at £25M, if it comes up with an acceptable, guaranteed maximum price. Otherwise, the contract will have to be re-tendered delaying work for at least three months.

The council is hoping Birse’s efforts to secure best value for money through its supply chain will keep the overall bill within the £56M Government funding provisionally agreed by the DfT in December. But Shetland’s assistant chief engineer Rob Davison said the price would not be finalised until August or September and it was too early to judge the contractor’s performance.

‘If their price is above the Government grant then obviously we have a problem. But we’re all working to try and keep it down,’ said Davison.

The cost has previously been put at £58.4M, which would leave the council to fund the balance, but the aim is to reduce this while still affording quality finishes such as granite paving and stainless steel parapets.

The 1.5km road will link existing sections on the north east side of the city centre and will include two 40m-span bridges, one crossing the River Don and the other carrying a local rail line.

Shetland is accompanying the scheme to remove through traffic from the city centre with measures to give pedestrians greater priority. Work has started on the £12.3M Shetland Square redevelopment designed to make pedestrian access from the train station into the city centre easier, which includes a new public plaza.

STREETCOMBER

ROOM WITH A VIEW?: Here’s another Highway Howler sent to Streetcomber this week. Once again, it involves some noisy building work and a streetlight. The sender is not specific when it comes to the country of origin, simply saying that it is ‘somewhere east’.

Streetcomber is certain that there must be other examples out there which do not involve streetlights. Remember, there’s a £5 wine voucher for each one used. Send entries to Streetcomber’s Highway Howlers at the usual address or e-mail editor@survサーslhpluk.com

SPIDER SENSE: Here’s one for all you budding traffic managers out there who have major bridges and structures to contend with. San Francisco highway patrol is calling on inventors to develop a ‘spider gun’ to tackle those with suicidal tendencies who use the city’s bridges as a final launch pad.

According to reports, police are seeking a new approach to the problem following a recent example where a man brandishing a knife held up traffic during a 13 hour stand off with highways patrol officers on the San Francisco to Oakland Bay Bridge. Drivers were so furious that they were shouting for the man to jump.

The proposed device, officers hope, would enable them to catch would be jumpers in a ‘spiders web’. Despite their frustration, they don’t appear to favour the approach of that famous fictional San Francisco cop Dirty Harry. Punching the jumper in the face and carrying them off the structure doesn’t appear to cut it with the modern police force code of ethics.

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