

# **Frustration at delays to upgrade of Sheriffhall roundabout**

**Council leaders from across south-east Scotland are growing increasingly frustrated at delays to the upgrade of Sheriffhall roundabout – which is set to cost “considerably more” than the original £120m price tag.**

It comes eight months after an independent report on the controversial project was completed.

The ‘flyover’ scheme to separate local traffic from motorway traffic at the notoriously congested roundabout was approved in 2021 to cut peak journey times on the A720 make way for active travel improvements at Sheriffhall.

But looming uncertainty over time-scales and cost are casting doubt over the future of the plans, which are funded through the Edinburgh City Region Deal.

Edinburgh’s council leader Cammy Day questioned whether there would be an “honest discussion about whether it’s actually going to even happen” during a meeting of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Joint Committee on Friday, June 7.

Day, who previously said he was “not convinced” the grade

separation was the right thing for the city, raised concerns the total cost would end up being “considerably more” than the £120m budget estimated back in 2018.

And he asked whether there would be a “blank cheque for Sheriffhall Roundabout” from Transport Scotland, who would be responsible for paying anything over the funding package coming from the UK and Scottish Governments.

Transport Scotland’s Gavin Dyet said costs would be updated soon and would be subject to “annual budget scrutiny”.

He gave the committee assurances the Scottish Government remained “committed” to the project.

Norman Hampshire, leader of East Lothian Council, said there was “huge public frustration about the delays”.

It was originally estimated following a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) to address objectors’ concerns Ministers would issue a final decision by ‘late 2022’, allowing construction to commence in ‘Summer 2025’.

However the PLI – which has dealt with over 2,700 separate objections – remains ongoing with no decision announced, despite an independent report containing recommendations being handed to the Scottish Government last October.

Cllr Hampshire added: “We’ve been promised this project was going to happen at least two years ago and public frustration has grown and the fact we don’t have any idea of the time-frame for a final decision to give the go-ahead.

“This project is going to be at least two years away once you give this go ahead for actually getting construction started and getting the thing built.”

Mr Dyet replied: “Transport Scotland would like to see the project progress as soon as possible, but I’m sure you can appreciate there was over 2,700 objections to the project and

these are under active consideration and they need the scrutiny they deserve.

“We need to follow due process.”

Meanwhile Scottish Borders council leader Euan Jardine said he feared the hold-ups could “de-rail all the good work the city deal is doing”.

A report to the committee said: “The Scottish Government is now taking the necessary time to consider the recommendations within the independent Reporter’s report to inform a decision on whether or not to proceed to complete the statutory process for the project as promoted.”

Climate campaigners argue the scheme should be scrapped altogether as it would “generate more traffic and contradicts Transport Scotland’s goal to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030”.

The Sheriffhall Overarching Objectors (Sh00), who have led the fight against the roundabout upgrade, said work would “involve immense carbon emissions, primarily through the consumption of diesel oil, concrete and steel, when immediate reductions in emissions are essential to avoid catastrophic climate change”.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter