

West Lothian Council becomes co-promoter of railway station

West Lothian Council has become a co-promoter of a new railway station for Winchburgh.

The agreement to act along with Winchburgh Developments Ltd aims to push the project towards a start date more than a decade after it was first promised.

The aim now is for the council to take a bid for funding forward to kick start a development which will hopefully be backed by Network Rail and Transport Scotland.

Any significant public infrastructure project in Scotland requires a promoter. The council's main role will be to oversee a funding application to the City Region Deal- an alliance of neighbouring local authorities which could benefit from major infrastructure such railway stations- or to any other public funding source.

Network Rail is currently costing the multi-million-pound project and costs and final designs are still to be confirmed. A business case also needs to be finalised by Transport Scotland before a submission for funding can be made.

It is hoped that once those milestones are complete that a submission for funding could be submitted before the summer.

The council is not in a position to seek funding from developers to pay for a railway station and it is expected

that the bulk of costs would come from the public purse either directly from the Scottish Government, or through national agencies such as Transport Scotland.

Recent station developments such as East Linton in East Lothian came in at around £18 million. Winchburgh Developments Ltd as the lead promoter has promised to support the project potentially by giving over land creating infrastructure such as park and ride facilities.

In a report to the Council Executive senior planning officer Wendy McCorrison said: "WDL has responsibility for delivery of much of the infrastructure required to support the expansion of the settlement and own the land around the location of the station and as such are well placed to adopt the role of promoter.

"However, in doing so they have invited the council to be co-promoter with them. Their logic in making this request is that the council would be better placed to oversee a funding application to the City Region Deal or to any other public funding source which may be identified through the work of the project."

The council would not be liable for costs associated with the development.

Lib Dem Councillor Sally Pattle said: "Hallelujah. It's great to see real progress."

However Conservative Angela Doran-Timson was concerned at how slow progress had been to reach this point and questioned how quickly a bid could be lodged.

Mrs McCorrison said the aim was that a bid could go before the City Region Deal by the Spring. "We are meeting monthly with the minister to put pressure in the Scottish Government transport and Scotland and Network Rail. We are putting pressure on with these regular meetings."

Chairing the meeting, Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick said that any delay had been down to the part of changes in personnel at ministerial level and delays in civil servants putting proposals before new ministers.

For the council, he said, it had been "foot to the floor."

Councillor Doran-Timson said: "I'm pleased to support this paper its a step forward for all residents who purchased houses on the promise of a railway station."

Councillor Willie Boyle, for the SNP said: " I look forward to this coming to fruition sooner rather than later."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter