

Project scope

Forth Replacement Crossing



AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
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The Forth Replacement Crossing (FRC) is the biggest publicly funded infrastructure project in Scotland in recent years at an overall cost of £1.35 billion. The main element of the project is a new bridge, the Queensferry Crossing, connecting Fife with Edinburgh and the Lothians. The project also includes: new connecting roads either side of the bridge; changes to the road network north and south of the bridge; an intelligent transport system to help improve the flow of traffic; and the Contact and Education Centre in South Queensferry. It has been funded from the Scottish Government's capital budget.

The total budget includes whole-life costs from when it was first scoped in 2007 up to the end of a five-year maintenance period in 2022. The Queensferry Crossing opened to traffic on 30 August 2017.

Transport Scotland identified the need for a replacement crossing following a number of inspections of the existing Forth Road Bridge (FRB) that detected deterioration of the cables that would require weight restrictions potentially from 2017. Transport Scotland commissioned a Forth Replacement Crossing Study in 2006/07, which

considered a number of options for repairs to the existing bridge and also replacing it. The study concluded that the cables could be replaced on the FRB, but at significant cost and disruption to traffic over a seven to nine year period. The Scottish Government did not consider this as a viable option and it decided to proceed with a replacement crossing. This was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 19 December 2007.

Transport Scotland's business case states that the objectives for the replacement crossing include: improve the management of traffic; provide greater flexibility for routine maintenance works; permit incidents and accidents to be addressed without the traffic disruption experienced on the FRB and allow traffic to travel more safely and smoothly. The project is not intended to increase the capacity of the route and the business case states that increased demand for travel across the Forth will need to be met by improved public transport.

Why is it important?

It is one of Scotland's largest infrastructure projects at a significant cost. It is in the public's interest to ensure that delivery of the project achieved value for money, particularly within the context of the current challenging financial climate.

It is important to the public and the wider Scottish economy that there is a reliable road link between Edinburgh and the Lothians and Fife. Sustaining this link across the Forth is essential to supporting the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy and in achieving its overarching aim of sustainable economic growth.

What will the audit look at?

The audit will assess whether the Scottish Government's delivery of the project has provided value for money. It will do this by assessing:

- if there was a clear business case for the project and a competitive procurement approach
- the governance and management of the project, including delivery of the project to time, cost and quality targets, and how the project costs were calculated

- whether the objectives and intended benefits were clearly set out from the start and the progress made towards achieving them.

The audit will also highlight particular good practice and learning from the project. We will draw on the key messages and recommendations that we have made in previous reports on major capital and infrastructure projects.

The audit will not look at the Scottish Government's wider capital investment programme and how projects are prioritised within the programme. We will ask Transport Scotland to demonstrate how it has achieved the project's short-term objectives. We will also look at the plans for measuring the longer-term intended benefits, such as improved accessibility and social inclusion, and sustainable development and economic growth.

How will we carry out the audit?

We will conduct interviews with key staff in Transport Scotland, the contractors, the Scottish Government, and some of the community groups and other interested parties. We will review key documents and carry out analysis of cost information, including reviewing budget assumptions, the basis for costs and how these have been applied.

What impact will the audit have?

The audit will provide assurance about the value for money of the delivery of one of Scotland's biggest infrastructure projects. It will provide assurance in relation to how the project was managed, if there was a competitive procurement process, and whether it followed relevant guidance and good practice, learning from other projects and our recommendations from previous reports on major capital projects. The findings and recommendations from the audit will provide lessons for future major capital projects.

Timetable and contacts

We plan to carry out the fieldwork for this audit in early 2018 and publish our final report in August 2018. If you have any questions or would like more information about this audit, please contact Jillian Matthew, Audit Manager, on 0131 625 1844 or by email at jmatthew@audit-scotland.gov.uk .



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