



Strategic Transport Forum

25th January 2019

Agenda Item Number 3: East West Rail Central Section

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Note the content of the briefing from the East West Railway Company**
- b) Agree the proposed arrangements for preparing a response to the consultation on the Central Section**

1. Context

- 1.1. The East West Rail Consortium commissioned work that led to the identification of a Conditional Output Statement for the Central Section (Bedford to Cambridge). That was the basis on which Network Rail had been taking work forward to identify a preferred corridor for the Central Section.
- 1.2. With the establishment of the East West Railway Company the work on the Central Section has been given fresh impetus.
- 1.3. The Government's response to the National Infrastructure Commission has signalled its intent to accelerate the delivery of the Central Section – with a target date in the latter half of the 2020's now the ambition. Indeed Budget 2018 confirmed an additional £20m of funding to support the work required to develop the business case for the Central Section.
- 1.4. Responding to this commitment from Government the East West Railway Company has been reviewing the Strategic Objectives and Conditional Output Statement for the Central Section – in particular to ensure they are consistent with the framework used with the Western Section.
- 1.5. The Company has signalled that it is intending to undertake a round of engagement on the Central Section beginning towards the end of January.
- 1.6. The meeting will receive a briefing on the consultation from the East West Railway Company, after which there will be an opportunity for Forum members to ask questions. Members of the Forum may also wish to take advantage of the 'drop-in' arrangements put in place by the Company, including the one being held in Bedford on the day of this Forum.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1. The consultation – which will be non-statutory – will be the first step in the journey towards developing the detail of the scheme and securing the necessary permission to build the Central Section (which will be through a Development Consent Order).
- 2.2. As with the development of the Western Section it is important that this Forum – as the Sub-national Transport Body – responds on the strategic issues associated with the Central Section.

- 2.3. In developing its response the Forum should take into consideration not only the progress made with the development and impending delivery of the Western Section, but also the ambitions for the Eastern Section which are shortly to be set out in a 'prospectus'.
- 2.4. In so doing it is proposed that the Forum look to draw on the work of the East West Rail Consortium, whose memberships extends across the entire breadth of the East West Rail project.
- 2.5. It is important to acknowledge that in developing the strategic response, this does not preclude individual local authorities and/or organisations commenting in their own right.
- 2.6. Experience however suggests that an agreed strategic position will strengthen our ability to influence and shape the route choice.
- 2.7. It is also important to bear in mind that any consideration of the options put forward by the Company for consideration cannot represent the total strategic transport investment requirements for this part of the Heartland.
- 2.8. In other words, in considering the options put forward by the East West Railway Company there will be a need for this Forum to consider the need for related infrastructure investment.
- 2.9. This Forum's consideration of the options for the Central Section may therefore identify other investment requirements that need to be fed into the investment programme for the Heartland in support of the overarching Transport Strategy.
Officer Working Group
- 2.10. The EEH Business Unit and EWR secretariat have arranged an initial session for senior officers from the local authorities that are most immediately interested in the delivery of the Central Section. This has been scheduled for the afternoon of 25th January.
- 2.11. This initial meeting will receive a more detailed briefing from the East West Railway Company, after which the officer group will begin to identify the key issues that need to be considered in preparing a draft position statement: one that will be used to inform a discussion by members of the EWR Consortium and this Forum.
- 2.12. It is envisaged that the Forum will want to consider the merits of the corridor options but also the revisions to the Strategic Objectives and Conditional Output Statement.

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Programme Director
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