



Strategic Transport Forum

29th March 2019

Agenda Item Number 4: East West Rail

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Endorse the response to the consultation on the Central Section agreed by the East West Rail Consortium**
- b) Note the update on progress with East West Rail**

1. Context

- 1.1. The Strategic Transport Forum looks to the East West Rail Consortium to provide leadership in respect of the East West Rail project - the Consortium representing the collective voice of all the relevant local authority and local enterprise partnership interests

2. Central Section: Consultation Response

- 2.1. The meeting of this Forum held on 25th January received a presentation by the East West Railway Company as part of the launch of the (non-statutory) consultation on potential corridors for the Central Section.
- 2.2. The Forum agreed that the East West Rail Consortium would take the lead in preparing a response to the consultation. The Consortium considered and agreed its response at its meeting on 13th March.
- 2.3. The agreed response is attached as Annex 1. The Forum is invited to endorse the response.

3. Western Section

- 3.1. The focus for the Western Section remains the Public Inquiry into the Transport and Works Act Order. The Programme Director appeared before the Inquiry on 13th February to present the supporting submission from the East West Rail Consortium/England's Economic Heartland.
- 3.2. The Inquiry is expected to conclude hearing submissions next month and it is anticipated that the Inspector's report will be prepared and submitted later this year. The ambition is to see works on site start at the end of the year/early 2020, subject to the Inspector confirming the Order.
- 3.3. Elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting the Forum will hear about the work underway to consider how best to utilise the spare capacity on the West Coast Main Line, post HS2 opening. This provides the opportunity to realise the ambition – identified by this Forum – of unlocking the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Bletchley – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common strategic axis.

4. Eastern Section

- 4.1. The strategic ambition underpinning the East West Rail Consortium is the objective of promoting and securing a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England, including a spur to Aylesbury.
- 4.2. Whilst delivery of both the Western and Central Sections the re-establishment of the rail corridor, the opportunities associated with the Eastern Section arise largely from investment in the existing infrastructure.
- 4.3. The Consortium has always been clear: delivery of the potential for the Eastern Section is not contingent upon delivery of the Central Section – indeed delivery of the Eastern Section has always been seen as potentially helping support the case for the Central Section creating as it would opportunities to improve the connectivity to/from areas to the east of Cambridge with the rest of the Heartland region.
- 4.4. Building on the output of work commissioned by the Consortium, the Eastern Section Working Group has prepared and published a 'prospectus' which sets out the strategic case for the Eastern Section
- 4.5. The Consortium has agreed that it will use the prospectus as the basis for making progress with the delivery of the Eastern Section

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