



Strategic Transport Forum

27th November 2020

Agenda Item 5: Transport Strategy – Next Steps

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) **Considers the implications of the consultation responses for the final version of the Transport Strategy**
- b) **Consider and comment on the draft introductory section for the final version of the Transport Strategy (annex 1)**

1. Context

- 1.1. The Transport Strategy sets the policy framework for strategic transport provision and investment in the Heartland over the next 30 years.
- 1.2. Following the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy the EEH Business Unit has reviewed the responses and undertaken an in-depth analysis of the implications for the final version of the Transport Strategy.
- 1.3. As reported to Forum Members in a previous item, responses received during the consultation show a high level of support for the approach and policy framework set out in the draft Strategy.
- 1.4. Forum Members will be assured that, through the consultation process, EEH has had confirmation that the proposed policy framework set out in the draft Transport Strategy is generally fit for purpose. However, we believe, based on the responses received that there is a need to strengthen the overarching narrative significantly.
- 1.5. Responses particularly focused around six themes that are substantive in nature and need to be addressed in more detail in preparing the final version of the Transport Strategy. These are:
 - Decarbonisation and the environment
 - Alignment with wider geographies/ initiatives
 - Reflecting levers for change
 - Consideration of the balance of modes/ schemes
 - People and safety
 - Rural connectivity
- 1.6. In essence the working hypothesis is that the final version of the Transport Strategy would benefit from a more focused and harder hitting opening, one which sets out the philosophy of the Strategy more explicitly – that being:

- To place decarbonisation of our transport system front and centre of our strategy and being explicit that we are committed to achieving the Net Zero requirement by an earlier date (options could be 2040 or 2045).

Linked to this would be a commitment to develop a regional carbon budget and to require all future investment priorities to be considered in the context of that budget – note that this approach would still recognise the importance of investing in roads in order to enable delivery of planned growth, however it would mean that where a proposal has an adverse impact on meeting the carbon budget complementary measures would be required to offset that impact.

- To place investment in ubiquitous digital connectivity (both fixed and mobile) as being a key strategic requirement for the future of our transport system.

Such an emphasis would build on, and support trends visible within both the work and home lifestyle, trends that have been in existence for some time but which in many cases have been accelerated by the need to respond to COVID-19

- To prioritise investment in strategic public transport schemes as the preferred means for making medium-long distance journeys, on the basis that they have a lower carbon footprint than the private care
- To ensure that investment in strategic public transport is complemented by increased investment in local connectivity
- And recognising the on-going critical role that freight and logistics has to play, both in terms of being fundamental to supply chains supporting businesses in the region and elsewhere in the UK, and being essential in terms of enabling individual businesses and residents to have access to goods and services (through use of e-commerce).

- 1.7. We believe that expressing more explicitly the philosophy of the Transport Strategy in this way makes it clearer as to what is required of our transport system moving forward. It would be consistent with the ambition (overwhelmingly expressed through the consultation) about the need to be more ambitious in terms of de-carbonisation, whilst at the same time recognising that the future shape and demand for travel continues to undergo change in response to external circumstances and that we need to encourage and embed such change for the longer term.
- 1.8. Annex 1 is an initial draft of how the harder hitting, more ambitious opening to the Transport Strategy might look. Whilst it is work in progress, the Forum is invited to consider and comment on both the approach proposed and its content.
- 1.9. It needs to be recognised that adopting the approach set out in Annex 1 will have consequences for the way we plan, develop and deliver investment in our transport strategy.
- 1.10. In particular we can anticipate that the transition from our current approach to investing in our transport system to the approach at the heart of the Transport Strategy is likely to lead to needing to review some existing investment proposals. Some proposals may need to be revised to ensure that they are consistent with the direction of travel, while others may no longer be appropriate and will require alternative solutions to be identified and brought forward.
- 1.11. The transition from the current transport paradigm – which in many respects continues to have echoes of ‘predict and provide’ – to the one that is required moving forward – ‘vision and validate’ – will be challenging in its own right: but we believe it is the right approach for the Transport Strategy.
- 1.12. In responding to the consultation responses we believe that it is essential for the final Transport Strategy to clearly set out the need for change and to show how the policy framework set out in the Strategy will achieve that change.



2. Next Steps

- 2.1. The original ambition had been to publish the final version of the Transport Strategy by the end of the calendar year
- 2.2. However, we believe that it is essential to get an initial steer on the way we respond to the six themes before finalising the Transport Strategy.
- 2.3. In addition, as noted earlier on the agenda of this meeting there are a number of national announcements that are likely to have implications for the final version of the Transport Strategy, including:
 - The publication of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan by the Department for Transport
 - The publication of the Climate Change Committee's sixth Carbon Budget – the first Carbon Budget since the adoption of the Net Zero requirement by 2050 by the UK Government.
- 2.4. It is therefore proposed that the preparation of the final version of the Transport Strategy will take place in two-steps:
 - Today's meeting (November 27) will allow the Forum to consider the implications of the six themes identified following the consultation – and in particular allow it to consider the implications of a more ambitious and aggressive approach to decarbonisation
 - The second – in early February – will present the Strategic Transport Forum with the final version of the Transport Strategy for consideration and approval.
- 2.5. Subject to Forum approval, this timeline will allow publication of the final Strategy to take place before the end of February 2021.

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