



# **Strategic Transport Leadership Board**

24 September 2021

## **Agenda Item 9: Business Unit Update**

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the meeting:**

- i) Notes the updates**
- a) Notes the additional funding commitment from the Department for Transport to support the development of an active travel strategy in the region**
- ii) Agrees to write (Annex 1) to the new Culture Secretary setting out the Heartland's proposal for establishing the Enterprise Partnership in support of our ambition to achieve ubiquitous digital connectivity**

### **1. Councillor Paul Castleman**

- 1.1. It is with great sadness that we heard of the death last month of Cllr Paul Castleman, who up until recently had represented Luton Council on the Strategic Transport Forum.
- 1.2. Paul, who had lived all his life in Luton, was first elected as a councillor in 2014 and became a member of the executive in May 2015. He was a proud Lutonian, who revelled in the town's cultural diversity. A large part of his motivation for entering the political sphere was to be able to help those less fortunate than himself.
- 1.3. His strong roots and ties to Luton meant he was passionate about its unique heritage and history. Paul was a member of the Luton Heritage Forum for a number of years. He dedicated significant amounts of his time to promoting projects related to making residents aware of Luton's past and was instrumental in forging the council's heritage strategy and obtaining money from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to secure a Heritage Enabler for Luton.
- 1.4. Paul was on the council's executive as portfolio holder for Highways until May of this year. During his term of office he was active in promoting the council's green transport agenda as well as having oversight of the town's travel infrastructure.

### **2. EEH Annual Conference**

- 2.1. The EEH Annual Conference is taking place in-person at Silverstone on 20 October. Board members should have received the invitation and registration form for the event.
- 2.2. The conference programme is in development but is likely to include updates on EEH work-streams and major infrastructure projects, a spotlight on economic opportunities from decarbonisation, and showcase for schemes being developed by local partners, including a discussion of funding requirements.
- 2.3. An external 'innovation zone' where emerging approaches to mobility can be showcased and experienced hands-on has also been planned.

- 2.4. As part of the planning for the conference measures are being put in place to ensure there are sustainable options for accessing the event. As such we are providing a free bus from Milton Keynes Central Station and Bicester Village Station to/from Silverstone.

### **3. Connectivity Studies**

- 3.1. A core part of EEH work moving forward is the programme of connectivity studies, as set out in the transport strategy.
- 3.2. Two connectivity studies, Oxford-Milton Keynes and Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford, have commenced. A third study, Oxford-Didcot-Swindon is in development with the local authorities, with the aim of starting the study this calendar year.
- 3.3. The future programme of connectivity studies, as outlined in the transport strategy, will be delivered based on future resource and funding. It is envisaged the programme will be delivered across four years.
- 3.4. The connectivity studies are a way of helping to meet the ambitions of the transport strategy, with the objectives of the studies flowing from its key principles. This should ensure a balanced future programme of interventions to inform our investment pipeline.
- 3.5. The outputs from the first studies will be available in March 2022 for future approval.

### **4. Alternative futures**

- 4.1. The long-term future has unknowns: political, socio-economic, environmental and technological.
- 4.2. Addressing future uncertainty in scenario development is an approach which is supported by the Department for Transport.
- 4.3. EEH and other sub-national transport bodies (STBs) have been considering how to plan for uncertainty with a need to build resilience into technical programmes and resulting investment plans.
- 4.4. Alternative futures are not predictions of the future, rather they are plausible 'futures' that reflect different drivers of change (for example, socio-economic changes in society or technological change). The 'drivers of change' have considerable but uncertain influences over the demand for future travel at the sub-regional level, influencing where and how people live and work as well as their attitudes and behaviours to travel and connectivity.
- 4.5. EEH has been working to develop different potential alternative futures which the Heartland may face. By creating a single, overarching perspective of alternative futures across the region EEH is ensuring a consistent baseline from which our work can evolve and be tested for its resilience.
- 4.6. The alternative futures work will be utilised across EEH workstreams, however, it is most imminently pertinent in the development of the connectivity studies programme.

### **5. Active travel in EEH**

- 5.1. England's Economic Heartland has an ambitious transport strategy, outlining the need to 'do things differently' alongside an ambition to reach net zero by 2040 ahead of the legally binding target.
- 5.2. A key action point in EEH's transport strategy is championing investment in active travel and shared transport solutions to improve local connectivity.
- 5.3. Government and EEH policy outlines that walking and cycling should be the natural choice for shorter journeys, helping improve quality of life and wellbeing through a safe, inclusive and accessible active travel network.



- 5.4. In addition, there is a need for an integrated transport system, linking sustainable first mile, last mile solutions to strategic public transport. Making active travel a viable, appealing, and accessible option as part of sustainable end to end journeys is key to helping deliver the ambitions of the transport strategy.
- 5.5. At its peak during the pandemic, levels of cycling increased by more than 300% compared with the same time the previous year. Harnessing current enthusiasm and enacting a long-term behaviour shift towards active travel can go some way towards decarbonisation ambitions, support the levelling up agenda as well as helping improve health and wellbeing.
- 5.6. As the sub-national transport body (STB) for the region, EEH can play a role in supporting the development of active travel in the region. EEH has been working with DfT and partners to explore options to take forward an active travel programme. This could include the development of an active travel strategy, setting an ambition for the region and an active travel forum to support local authorities.
- 5.7. On Friday 17 September, DfT confirmed to EEH that Baroness Vere has agreed to commit further investment in the region to support the delivery of an active travel strategy. The total additional funding allocated is yet to be confirmed. This positive news reaffirms DfT's commitment to supporting the region's ambitions for a decarbonised transport system that puts the user at the forefront of our approach to planning connectivity in the future.

## **6. Ubiquitous Digital Connectivity**

- 6.1. At its meeting in December 2020 the EEH Leaders' group agreed to work with the Satellite Applications Catapult to develop the strategic case for a programme specifically designed to respond to the need to improve digital connectivity in support of the implementation of the transport strategy.
- 6.2. The Catapult, based in southern Oxfordshire, brings a particular expertise with regards to the exploitation of satellite-based systems as a means of providing ubiquitous digital connectivity in more remote areas, and can also act as a gateway to the wider Catapult network and its expertise in a range of growing market segments.
- 6.3. Moreover, the Catapult brings knowledge and experience of the capability afforded by the OneWeb system: a system in which the government has made a considerable investment.
- 6.4. A draft of the strategic case – entitled Transition – was presented to the EEH Leaders at their meeting on 9 June. An executive summary of the document is attached to this paper (Annex 2).

### *An Enterprise Alliance – Achieving the Step Change*

- 6.5. One of the primary causes for the lack of progress in improving digital connectivity is our linear approach to infrastructure planning and delivery. We remain constrained by an approach wherein a single organisation/department takes ownership of both the problem and solution.
- 6.6. Embracing a systems approach moving forward is critical to overcoming the limitations of our current methodology. At the heart of the strategic case prepared by the Satellite Applications Catapult is the establishment of an 'enterprise partnership'.
- 6.7. The enterprise partnership is the opportunity for all interested parties – public and private sector, without favour or advantage – to come together in a shared endeavour that is specifically focused on making the step change in our approach to planning and delivering ubiquitous digital connectivity.



*A Proposal to Government*

- 6.8. EEH has responded at length to the calls for evidence from the DfT for input into their work on the future of mobility – in both urban and rural areas, using the framework provided the regional transport strategy to make the case as to why ubiquitous digital connectivity is critical to implementation of that Strategy.
- 6.9. In July 2021, EEH Leaders agreed to write to the then Transport Minister Rachel Maclean MP, building on her interest in ambitious proposals that support new and emerging space technologies critical to future transport needs. The minister's response to the letter encouraged more joined up work to be undertaken, primarily with the Oxford – Cambridge Arc Infrastructure Group, so that funding opportunities could be better enabled within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- 6.10. There is a clear need to work with government to enable the investment that is required in order to deliver ubiquitous digital connectivity. The strategic case presented for consideration ('Transition') identifies the scale of the additional investment required to take the proposal to the next step.
- 6.11. EEH's Spending Review submission includes a bid for investment to support digital infrastructure in the region and it is vital that, at this point in the process, we write to DCMS to set out the investment that is needed, and the scale of the opportunity it presents.
- 6.12. As a result, it is recommended that the chair write to the Culture Secretary (draft letter is at Annex 1) setting out the Heartland's proposal and seeking a dialogue with her and officials on how to take this initiative forward.

**Naomi Green**  
**Interim Director**  
**September 2021**