Strategic Transport Forum

5th February 2021

Agenda Item 3: Transport Strategy

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the meeting agree to:

   a) Publish the Transport Strategy as presented at Annex 1, subject to amendments agreed by the Forum at this meeting

   b) Publish the Integrated Sustainability Post Adoption Statement alongside the Transport Strategy, subject to amendments agreed by the Forum at this meeting

   c) Incorporate the proposed Operating Framework as an annex to the Transport Strategy, subject to amendments agreed by the Forum at this meeting

   d) Submit the Transport Strategy, including the Operating Framework, to the Secretary of State for Transport

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.   A consultation on the draft Transport Strategy was held from 14th July to 6th October 2020.

1.3.   Consultation responses showed a high level of support for the approach and policy framework set out in the draft Transport Strategy.

1.4.   However, the analysis identified six substantive themes which the final strategy needed to address in more detail.

   • 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

1.5.   Following the consultation, and reflecting the Forum's earlier decisions, the strategy's policies and narrative have been revised. A copy of the final transport strategy is provided in Annex 1 for this meeting's consideration and approval.

1.6.   The transport strategy will be launched in mid-February. It is proposed that a brief summary document will also sit alongside the main document.

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1.7.   A programme of communications activity to coincide with the launch is planned. This includes a webinar featuring the Forum chair, which will formally launch the strategy. EEH Business Unit will ensure Forum members are kept informed of the communications plan and invitations to the webinar will be sent to all Forum attendees.

2.   Amendments

2.1.   An amendment tracker for the strategy's introductory chapters and policies is set out at Annex 2.

2.2.   It is worth particularly noting the following changes from the draft Transport Strategy, made due to consultation feedback:

- Introductory chapters: The introductory chapters have been strengthened with the inclusion of the 'five-point plan of action' which succinctly sets out the key objectives of the strategy. They also include more detail on issues raised during the consultation, for example the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, land-use planning and the environment (including the historic environment).

- Principles and vision: The principle on decarbonisation now includes an ambition to reach net-zero emissions by 2040. The principles also now reference a safe transport system and reducing the environmental impact of freight.

- Places of Strategic Importance: This list has been amended due to consultation feedback. New categories have been added, including garden villages/ towns and universities. The terminology has also been tweaked. It is proposed that the final strategy includes a map of places of strategic importance rather than a table (see Annex 3).

- Policies: Three policies have been deleted because on review they are covered by other policies. There are five new policies, associated with environmental gain; safety; connectivity studies (east-west and north-south); and the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor. Several existing policies have been strengthened to reflect consultation feedback.

- Investment pipeline: The investment pipeline has been revised to ensure it is consistent with new language in the policies. It also now includes EEH's submissions for the Major Road Network. An indicative timeframe for delivery of each scheme is now included, after consultation with officers.

2.3.   In addition, the language within the strategy has been tightened to be more succinct and direct. The design and layout of the final document will also be simplified due to consultation feedback.

3.   Transport Decarbonisation

3.1.   The Forum is invited to particularly note the revision to the principle on decarbonisation, which now includes an ambition to reach net-zero emissions by 2040.

3.2.   It has long been an expectation of the Strategic Transport Forum that the EEH Transport Strategy should be bold and ambitious on decarbonisation. Through Forum discussions and feedback in the consultation, an ambition to reach net-zero emissions by 2040 is now included.

3.3.   To achieve zero carbon on the EEH transport system in that timeframe is ambitious, not least because of the volume of freight that passes through the region. However, if we are to deliver the Strategic Transport Forum's vision for the Heartland region, it is necessary. In adopting this, there will be implications for the decisions and investment priorities that we make. EEH Business Unit will work with Transport Officers to ensure all implications of our decisions are well considered.

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3.4. In addition, and in light of further delays to the publication of the DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Transport Strategy commits EEH to the development of a decarbonisation road map. EEH Business Unit will develop the decarbonisation road map as part of its 2021/22 work programme.

4. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal

4.1. The Forum has been supportive that transport solutions are planned (and delivered) in a way that respects and enhances the natural, built and historic environment.

4.2. The Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) has been a key technical study that has supported the development of the Transport Strategy. It provided an independent assessment of the Transport Strategy against sustainability objectives and ensured the Transport Strategy has had, throughout its development, an iterative approach to considering and shaping our approach.

4.3. The ISA was consulted on alongside the draft Transport Strategy. The main themes arising from the ISA consultation were:

- Level of information about historic/ heritage asset
- Access to green space and infrastructure
- Health and wellbeing benefits of active travel
- Water management
- Ageing population
- Preservation of visual landscape
- Extreme weather events
- Decarbonisation of the transport system
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Road safety and community safety
- Net gain principles

4.4. Using feedback from the ISA consultation, a number of changes were made to both the Transport Strategy and the ISA document. The changes to the Transport Strategy that have been made as a result of the ISA are outlined in Annex 4. The revised ISA document is included as Annex 5.

4.5. Reflecting consultation comments, the Forum is also advised that a specific policy on the natural and historic environment has now been included in the Transport Strategy:

> Policy 6: *New transport development in the region should conserve and where possible enhance the natural, built and historic environment*

4.6. The final stage of the ISA is the production of a Post Adoption Statement (PAS). The PAS allows stakeholders to see how environmental and sustainability factors have been considered throughout the development of the Transport Strategy and how consultation comments have been taken into account throughout the process.

4.7. The Post Adoption Statement is included in Annex 6. Subject to Forum agreement, the PAS it will be published alongside the Transport Strategy.

5. Implementation of the Transport Strategy – Operating Framework

5.1. Delivery of specific proposals will remain the responsibility of individual infrastructure owners and service providers.

5.2. However, the work of EEH as the Sub-national Transport Body for the region will ensure we are able to support our partners in the implementation of that Strategy in three ways:

- *Strategic Influence* – ensuring the regional voice, through the Strategic Transport Forum shapes the development of national investment programmes overseen by the Government

- *Co-ordination* – providing a practical and efficient mechanism for aligning the development and implementation of solutions on individual networks
- *Accelerating Delivery* – helping to ensure that schemes and initiatives which cross local authority boundaries are delivered efficiently and at the earliest opportunity.

5.3.   EEH has already established and follows the operating principles for achieving these ambitions. In seeking to deliver the Transport Strategy, the focus is to build on our existing success to provide clarity and give confidence as to the roles, responsibilities and expectations on the part of EEH and DfT.

5.4.   Forum Members will recall that the Secretary of State is not minded to support additional statutory STBs, although he has not ruled this out completely.

5.5.   Accordingly, the Forum agreed at its previous meeting to develop a concordat that would set out the operating framework within which EEH and DfT would work to in order to ensure implementation of the Transport Strategy's priorities.

5.6.   Since the previous Strategic Transport Forum, EEH Business Unit has been working with DfT Officials to agree the text and principles of an operating framework. As part of those discussions, our advice is that the most effective way of presenting the operating framework would be to include it as an annex within the Transport Strategy.

5.7.   A copy of the proposed Operating Framework is included in Annex 7.

5.8.   Forum Members will be mindful that the Operating Framework set out is focused on the commitments of DfT and EEH. In parallel, the EEH Business Unit is working to set up a protocol with Highways England and Network Rail. Progress with engagement with Highways England is set out in the Business Unit Update for this meeting. EEH Business Unit will provide a full report on the working protocols between EEH and Highways England and Network Rail respectively to the Strategic Transport Forum in May 2021.

Adam King
Communications Manager
February 2021

Annex 4: Amendments to the Transport Strategy following the ISA consultation

Theme/consultation comment	Proposed change/ new information	Change to Transport Strategy/ PAS
Historic and heritage assets (including access)	Additional historic environment within narrative including access to special places, such as heritage assets should be in line with Policy 4 (Travel Hierarchy) A new policy is included (Policy 6) - New transport development in the region should conserve and where possible enhance the natural, built and historic environment.	Transport Strategy
Green Infrastructure and access to green space	Further information included in the transport strategy to demonstrate how improving local connectivity to assets (such as the natural environment) not only improves health and wellbeing but also reduces the need to travel. This approach brings nature to people rather than people having to travel to nature. The link between greening transport corridors and provision of green infrastructure and how it contributes to wider environmental benefits such as biodiversity net gain has been highlighted.	Transport Strategy
Health and wellbeing benefits of active travel	Additional narrative has been added to the transport strategy more explicitly highlight this link. Championing investment in active travel and shared modes of transport is part of the strategy's five point plan of action.	Transport Strategy

Water management	Additional text to show that taking a whole system approach and early engagement with areas outside of transport can bring wider benefits such as cost savings. The transport strategy notes that these themes are also about managing and operating the existing asset and responding to issues such as extreme weather events.	PAS also to clarify technical water management comments.
Ageing population	Reference had already been made to an ageing population in the Draft Transport Strategy. Further detail has been added on inclusivity in the more general sense (which includes ageing population).	No specific change but further information added in relation to inclusivity to the Transport Strategy
Preservation of visual landscape	The transport strategy refers to the special landscape across the Heartland region. In order to keep the level of information in the strategy proportionate, no further information is necessary.	No change
Extreme weather events	Some information relating the occurrence of extreme weather events was presented in the Draft Transport Strategy. Further narrative has been added about the impact of extreme weather events on vulnerable people and continued investment in the transport system to deal with operational management and information provision.	Transport Strategy
De-carbonisation of the transport system	Decarbonisation remains at the forefront of the transport strategy, with a proposed revised principle: Achieving net-zero carbon emissions from transport no later than 2050, with an ambition to reach this by 2040.	Transport Strategy

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Accessibility and inclusion	Additions have been made to the transport strategy highlighting the DfT's Inclusive Transport Strategy, including inclusive by design principles and the addition of accessible information. Further narrative will be added about accessibility.	Transport Strategy
Road Safety and community safety	Further narrative included about safety. This will accompany current wording about the principles of applying a 'safe system approach'. Additional narrative surround safety has been added to the transport strategy alongside a new policy (Policy 7)	Transport Strategy
Net gain	Clarification and additional wording relating to net gain following advice from Arc Environment Group. A new policy is included (Policy 6) - New transport development in the region should conserve and where possible enhance the natural, built and historic environment.	Transport Strategy
Interaction between the Transport Strategy and ISA	Additional narrative added to the ISA Post Adoption Statement to highlight how the ISA and transport strategy were developed iteratively (including meeting dates)	PAS