



Strategic Transport Leadership Board Minutes

Friday 18 February 2022

Notes of meeting held via Microsoft Teams

In Attendance:

CLlr Richard Wenham	Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council (Chair)
CLlr Liz Leffman	Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
CLlr Martin Tett	Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Mayor Dave Hodgson	Mayor, Bedford Borough Council
CLlr Emily Darlington	Cabinet Member, Milton Keynes Council
CLlr David Renard	Leader, Swindon Borough Council
CLlr Michele Mead	Leader, West Oxfordshire District Council
CLlr Robert Roche	Executive Member, Luton Borough Council
CLlr Lucy Nethsingha	Leader Cambridgeshire County Council
CLlr Phil Larratt	Cabinet Member, West Northamptonshire Council
CLlr Graham Lawman	Executive Member, North Northamptonshire Council
CLlr Phil Bibby	Executive Member, Hertfordshire County Council

Apologies:

CLlr Wayne Fitzgerald	Leader, Peterborough City Council
CLlr Richard Roberts	Leader, Hertfordshire County Council
CLlr Jonathon Nunn	Leader, West Northamptonshire Council
Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	Mayor, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined
Neil Gough	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Andrew Smith	Buckinghamshire LEP
Ian Thompson	Buckinghamshire Council
Peter Horrocks	South East Midlands LEP
Paddy Bradley	Swindon & Wiltshire LEP
Bev Hindle	Arc Leaders Group
Dave Taylor	Luton Borough Council
Lewis Banks	Peterborough City Council
Andrew Down	South Oxfordshire District Council
Jon Shortland	Bedford Borough Council
Paul Thomas	Milton Keynes Council
Paul Raynes	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
Rowland Potter	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
Richard Leonard	Strategy & Planning, National Highways
Andrew Davie	Central Bedfordshire Council
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
Sue Frost	Luton Borough Council
Mike Batheram	Atkins
Matt Gamble	Atkins
Emma Walker	Network Rail
Carew Satchwell	Network Rail

Also in Attendance:

Paul Moorby	Swindon & Wiltshire LEP
Richard Bell	Swindon Borough Council
Jim Newton	West Northamptonshire Council
George Candler	North Northamptonshire Council
Jeremy Smith	Cambridgeshire County Council
Tim Bellamy	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
Rachel Wileman	Oxfordshire County Council
James Povey	Milton Keynes Council
Antony Swift	Luton Borough Council
Mark Kemp	Hertfordshire County Council
Hilary Chipping	SEMLEP
Christopher Cole	Network Rail
Matthew Taylor	National Highways
Jonathan Gay	DfT
Phil Southall	Oxford Bus Company
David Gladwin	GBRTT
Andrew Scott	GBRTT

England’s Economic Heartland

Naomi Green	Interim Programme Director
Fiona Foulkes	Business Manager
Suzanne Winkels	Principal Technical Lead
Adam King	Communications and Policy Manager
James Golding-Graham	Decarbonisation Manager
Abigail Nichols	Project Lead
Nathalie Mazhunga	Project Officer
Beth Dormer	Executive Assistant

	Item
1	<p>Welcome & Actions</p> <p>Richard Wenham (RW) opened the meeting. Members were content with the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting.</p> <p>Naomi Green (NG) noted that all actions are either complete or agenda items during this discussion.</p>
2	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>There were no questions from members of the public.</p>
3	<p>Implications of the Levelling Up White Paper for delivering the regional transport strategy</p> <p><i>To consider the levelling up white paper in the context of delivering the regional transport strategy and to agree the draft text setting out the need for continued investment in the Heartland region.</i></p> <p>NG introduced the item. The paper sought to consider regionally significant infrastructure and implications for securing investment in this region as a result of the Levelling Up white paper.</p> <p>STBs were acknowledged in the white paper, demonstrating that from a devolution perspective DfT recognise there is a role for STBs. NG said it was positive that the White Paper referred to the creation of Centres of Excellence to support local transport and delivery.</p>

	<p>NG noted that the White Paper emphasises the comparative advantages of the greater south east and how this may have implications for investment moving forward. NG invited the meeting to note and comment on the proposed regional narrative shown in annex 1.</p> <p>Martin Tett (MT) expressed concern around the potential implications for strategic transport investment in the EEH region.</p> <p>Robert Roche (RR) said that it would be helpful to know timescales in relation to the regional centre of excellence. He expressed concern around Luton Airport not being featured in the regional narrative, especially in relation to Global Britain.</p> <p>Liz Leffman (LL) suggested that we should emphasise the region’s ambition to maintain and enhance its position as global leaders however, the pockets of poverty in this area should not be overlooked.</p> <p>Emily Darlington (ED) requested emphasising that levelling up in some areas should not result in levelling down in others.</p> <p>Lucy Nethsingha (LN) commented that it should be recognised that, given the shared posterity fund and other funds are there to replace European funding no longer received, the fact that this region is not set to receive much funding at all is a significant loss of potential infrastructure funding.</p> <p>Phil Southall (PS) suggested emphasising to government that investment in buses is needed for the benefit of residents and the infrastructure they need to work in and across the region.</p> <p>Dave Hodgson (DH) noted that on page 6 of the regional narrative the inequalities in this region are discussed. DH suggested that strengthening this section by highlighting the struggle residents face due to the cost of transport and lack of connectivity.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consider the implications of the levelling up white paper, in the context of delivering the regional transport strategy b) Revise the regional narrative on the basis of feedback received
<p>4</p>	<p>Long Term Railway Investment Priorities</p> <p><i>To receive an update from Great British Railways Transition Team.</i></p> <p><i>To consider and agree EEH’s response to the 30-year rail plan call for evidence.</i></p> <p>Andrew Scott (AS) introduced the item sharing that his role is to lead on designing the operating model for GBRTT in terms of customer relationships and on its approach to regional partnerships. Andrew was joined by David Gladwin (DG) from GBRTT’s communications team.</p> <p>AS noted that GBRTT is a distinct team responsible for driving forward reforms and preparing the way for the sector’s new guiding mind. Network Rail and many of the functions carried out by the Rail Delivery Group and DfT will be absorbed by GBR.</p> <p>AS shared that there are plans to prepare to launch GBR in phases up to the end of 2023. The timeline is subject to several approval processes needed from DfT and the Treasury.</p> <p>The White Paper called for a Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP) and call for evidence. This will set the direction for the whole industry in line with national priorities with a focus on delivery. GBRTT have had 450 organisations respond to its call for evidence and will be publishing a report on this in due course.</p> <p>There is an ambition for the empowered regions that will be established in GBR to have strong relationships with its partners and for those organisations to have an input into how the railway operates in those areas.</p> <p>AS noted the competition for a HQ for GBR recently launched by DfT. Applications are welcome from across Britain and applications will be assessed on criteria which</p>

	<p>will be used to inform, support, and complete the selection process. The shortlist will be announced later this year.</p> <p>Phil Bibby (PB) asked how the operation of railways will improve as a result of this reorganisation. AS said that the new integrated organisation will improve the customer experience.</p> <p>David Renard (DR) asked what number of jobs are likely to be created by the HQ. AS shared that the number of jobs can be found on the government website.</p> <p>ED also asked what the new HQ will mean for the 6,000 jobs currently in Milton Keynes. AS commented that there are no plans currently to change the role of Milton Keynes or the jobs there.</p> <p>Graham Lawman (GL) asked how the regional offices will be aligned in the new organisation. AS shared that GBR will be using the current Network Rail regional structure, and this will evolve over time.</p> <p>NG highlighted that the draft call for evidence response shared with members outlines that the current Network Rail regional structure is difficult for the EEH region. NG suggested that the role of the STB needs to be strengthened in the work of GBR to represent the needs of its members.</p> <p>RR said that more consideration should be given to providing direct services to Luton Airport Parkway from places such as Milton Keynes and Aylesbury enabled by full delivery of EWR in the response to the WISP. NG noted that the response refers to EEH's Passenger Rail Study that provides a holistic view of the priorities of the region.</p> <p>PS suggested adding a point around introducing an impact assessment from a strategic point of view in section 1E, the integration with the wider transport system, in Annex 1.</p> <p>NG said that all comments made have been noted and that EEH will revise the document to then be recirculated for the Boards review and approval.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Receive a presentation from the Great British Railways Transition Team on their long-term ambitions for the railway b) Provide Great British Railways Transition team with clarity over key priorities for rail investment in local areas c) Receive a final draft response to the call for evidence for the Whole Industry Strategic Plan (Annex 1) for approval
<p>5</p>	<p>Business Planning and Budget</p> <p><i>To consider the proposed business plan for 2022/23 onwards and to agree the proposed local authority contributions for EEH for the next financial year.</i></p> <p>NG introduced the item. The Board in May will receive the financial year-end position and a draft annual report for the Board's consideration and approval. In advance, annex 1 sets out the core areas of work delivered throughout the current financial year. EEH have not yet received its settlement from DfT for the next financial year (2022/2023).</p> <p>A core evolution for EEH is to not just deliver strategic policy and evidence but to move into scheme development through the business case proposal. TfN and Midlands Connect are already operating in this space. EEH will work with the Board to identify which schemes are taken forward.</p> <p>In the absence of a funding settlement, EEH have taken three scenarios and set out what proportion of spend will be spent on strategy, policy and evidence and scheme development. Para 6.5 outlined some of these options from the highest level of allocation to the lowest. The essential areas of work include refreshing the evidence base and the connectivity studies programme.</p> <p>RR suggested including more detail as to the criteria used when local authorities are considered for support and the business case development. NG commented</p>

	<p>that this would be brought to the Board for consideration before any decisions are made.</p> <p>NG highlighted the paper circulated to the Board setting out the justification for a 2% or 5.1% increase and the implications of that on the ability for EEH to continue its programme and cover increased staff costs.</p> <p>MT shared that Buckinghamshire Council will not be increasing its contribution to 5.1% but is content with the increase of 2%. All other members agreed to support the 5.1% increase in contributions.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note progress with delivery of the 2021/22 Business Plan b) Note the update regarding DfT funding for 2022/23 c) The proposed balance of activity for EEH in the three years ahead, and agrees that this balance should form the basis on which DfT funding is allocated, once confirmed d) Note the final Business Plan for 2022/23 and beyond will be brought for Board approval in May 2022 e) Support a 5.1% increase in partner contributions to EEH, in line with inflation
<p>6</p>	<p>Active Travel</p> <p><i>To consider and agree the ambition for active travel in the region, developed to inform the Active Travel Strategy.</i></p> <p>Abigail Nichols (AN) introduced the item. She said Active Travel Phase 1 looks at places, issues and opportunities, and the development of a policy review of national, local, and regional policy around active travel. The report is being funded by DfT.</p> <p>EEH are proposing to scope phase 2 with officers as part of the steering group which will focus on how the ambition is delivered.</p> <p>Section 2 of the paper updates on a commission done with Sustrans to look at the Varsity Way. The steering group is looking at the current state of the Varsity Way route and a report will be produced to outline options to improve it.</p> <p>MT asked for thought to be given to how we move from these routes being used for commutes and not just used recreationally.</p> <p>ED asked for reassurance that the route respects and works in tandem the Redway structure in Milton Keynes. She also asked if active travel along canal routes is being looked at. AN confirmed that there has been engagement with Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and The Canal & River Trust.</p> <p>LL suggested the introduction of local hubs in rural areas to encourage active travel in those areas.</p> <p>LN was surprised to see that there wasn't more mention of Cambridge in the document.</p> <p>AN thanked members for their comments and noted that these themes and comments will be picked up in phase 2.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the ambition for active travel in the region, as set out in the 'EEH Active Travel Strategy: The Ambition' b) Note that there will be a phase two of the active travel strategy

<p>7</p>	<p>Major Road Network 2020-2025 Programme <i>To agree the recommended approach to supporting the EEH MRN programme going forward.</i></p> <p>Suzanne Winkels (SW) introduced the item. The paper is in response to the letter from DfT in January setting out there is insufficient funds to promote all schemes in the existing programme. DfT have expressed concern around schemes extending beyond 2025.</p> <p>EEH circulated a letter to members requesting an update on the schemes in the programme and whether they still meet the strategic requirements from DfT. EEH is confident that all schemes still meet those requirements and contribute to EEH's Transport Strategy and therefore they should still be promoted.</p> <p>Since producing the paper, it has been announced that the Century Park access road in Luton will now be called the Green Horizons Access Scheme. These updates have been shared with DfT.</p> <p>NG noted that, in the case of the Bedford Western Bypass, Bedford have acknowledged that that scheme, while still strategic, would be better delivered post-May 2025 and this has been recognised by DfT.</p> <p>RW noted that no data has been provided from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. NG shared that EEH is still awaiting that data.</p> <p>LN and Tim Bellamy (TB) agreed to speak with the relevant teams in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough respectively about their data and schemes and report back.</p> <p>MT linked this conversation back to levelling up and the importance of investment in this region.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the letter from DfT requiring all STBs to review their Major Road Network programme 2020-2025, based on deliverability and compliances with emerging new priorities for the department b) Note the current position of EEH's programme of Major Road Network schemes c) EEH continuing to support those MRN schemes that are viable for delivery in the timeframe, given they remain strategic priorities for the region
<p>8</p>	<p>Digital Connectivity <i>To note the update on progress with digital connectivity in the region and consider next steps.</i></p> <p>James Golding-Graham (JGG) introduced the item. It is intended to provide an update on where EEH is in its approach to developing proposals to government around delivering ubiquitous digital connectivity.</p> <p>Following discussions with colleagues at Satellite Applications Catapult and other STBs there is a recognition that EEH may not be first in line for funding to develop its business case. EEH would be better placed working directly with one of the other regions to access funding.</p> <p>JGG outlined the recommendations and opened the item up for discussion. LN stated that the focus on digital connectivity for public transport is important.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p>

	<p>a) Support the approach to the Heartland 'twinning' with other regions in order to enhance the case for digital connectivity and capacity and support levelling up</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Business Unit Update and consultation responses</p> <p>NG introduced the item and noted that recommendations c, d, and e are about a range of activities that are ongoing in EEH.</p> <p>Section 6 of the paper discusses the in-year funding and Board members have been updated on this throughout the process. EEH secured £425k of additional funding which has been broken down into 4 areas: £100k each for planning for net zero, supporting and planning for EV infrastructure, buses and capacity and capability. In order to manage this within the timescales, EEH have joined up with Transport East and Transport for South East.</p> <p>Section 7 of the paper notes and provides a summary of the report on road pricing published by the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee.</p> <p>Referring to section 8, NG noted that the bus strategy being developed by EEH is continuing to be discussed with the Bus Operators Association to ensure the report is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Section 9 of the paper discusses the challenge around BSIP funding and the need for EEH to continue to press for clarity around local transport funding in the future.</p> <p>GL commented that at the previous Board meeting DfT highlighted how oversubscribed the bus requirements are however, we have not had any further updates. PS shared that the budget was reduced from £3bn to £1.2bn and DfT has pledged to let all authorities know what their allocation is by the end of February.</p> <p>NG shared that there are three consultation responses that have been submitted for approval. The paper sets out some of EEH's key themes in relation to the NIC baseline review.</p> <p>EEH have worked closely with Transport East who have consulted on their Transport Strategy. The response prepared by EEH for this consultation is supportive of the proposals that they have provided.</p> <p>Oxfordshire's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan is currently out for consultation and EEH are very supportive of the document.</p> <p>In response to the National Infrastructure call for evidence, RW suggested strengthening the issue around lack of infrastructure in the heartland.</p> <p>GL noted that in the first paragraph of question 16 there are mentions of demand management policies that North Northamptonshire could not support. RW requested that EEH review that paragraph to ensure that individual authorities are not committed to policies they do not support. NG noted that this paragraph has been written carefully to convey that EEH is not specific in its preferred pathway but agreed to reinforce this more clearly.</p> <p>NG commented that the current connectivity studies programme map included in the paper included 10 connectivity studies as agreed as part of the Transport Strategy. Based on feedback on the first two studies, advice from consultants is that the narrow geographies of our studies pose challenges when looking at strategic connectivity as they default to local solutions. Based on the advice from consultants, two studies, one on western north south movements and another on southern east west movement.</p> <p>MT expressed apprehension around losing links to local aspects by combining large areas of geography together.</p>

	<p>GL requested more information about cost and delivery timescales. GL also noted the difference between freight connectivity and car passenger transport connectivity.</p> <p>NG said that, based on the comments made today, EEH need to provide greater assurance and clarity over what the two different options will look like. Furthermore, EEH will consider whether this is the correct approach or if there is too much consolidation. NG agreed to bring a revised copy back to the Board in May.</p> <p>The meeting agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review a revised copy of the consolidation of the connectivity studies programme at the May Board meeting b) The following consultation responses: NIC call for evidence (section 2, annex 2); Transport East transport strategy (section 3, annex 3); Oxfordshire LTCP (section 4, annex 4) subject to relevant changes discussed in the meeting c) Support the proposal to create an EEH All-Party Parliamentary Group (section 5) d) Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EEH’s successes in securing in year funding (section 6); - the Transport Committee’s report on road pricing (section 7); and - Progress with the EEH bus strategy (section 8); e) Supports EEH business unit’s ongoing work to raise issues with bus funding to DfT (section 9)
10	<p>Future Meeting Dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13 May 2022 11am – 1pm - 15 July 2022 11am – 1pm - 30 September 2022 11am – 1pm - 9 December 2022 11am – 1pm <p><i>It is proposed that three meetings per year be held virtually, with two meetings in person</i></p>