



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

13 May 2022

Agenda Item 4

2022/23 Work Programme and Business Plan

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Notes the confirmed financial settlement from the Department for Transport for 2022/23, and indicative allocations provided for two years beyond that.**
- b) Agrees the three-year business plan (annex 1) for EEH and the proposed work programme for 2022/23 (annex 2)**
- c) Agrees to complement the Board's role in overseeing delivery of the Business Plan through the creation of Board champions, to be elected in July 2022.**
- d) Agrees that the Regional Evidence Base should be developed with the principle of ensuring it is easily accessible for all public sector partners**
- e) Agrees the programme of connectivity studies (annex 3), revised following previous feedback from the Board.**

1. Purpose of report

This paper seeks the Board's agreement on the programme of activity proposed for EEH to take forward in the three years ahead.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. On 21 March 2022, the Department for Transport (DfT) confirmed England's Economic Heartland's funding settlement for financial year 2022/23. In addition to the confirmed settlement for the year ahead, DfT provided an indicative allocation for the subsequent two years.
- 2.2. Based on previous steers provided by the Board, this paper seeks approval to the draft three-year business plan and the 2022/23 work programme.
- 2.3. Given the growing volume and profile of the EEH work programme there is an increased need to ensure Board members are able to oversee and steer our work, particularly capturing their own ambitions and expectations of EEH.
- 2.4. The revised future programme of connectivity studies includes three study areas, based on feedback provided by the Board in February 2022.

3. Context

- 3.1. England's Economic Heartland continues to grow and strengthen its contribution as the sub-national transport body for the region.

- 3.2. On 21 March 2022, the Department for Transport (DfT) confirmed England’s Economic Heartland’s funding settlement for financial year 2022/23. In addition to the confirmed settlement for the year ahead, DfT provided an indicative allocation for the subsequent two years. While this doesn’t allow us to commit to a full three-year work programme, it does mark a positive shift in the way we can plan forward in the longer term, including the creation of a three-year business plan.
- 3.3. Although the DfT contribution provides the significant part of EEH’s funding, funding contributions from individual local authority partners play an equally important role. Through local contributions, EEH is able to host a small number of permanent staff and ensure the region is able to represent itself at events and through communications activity – something that DfT funds will not support. In February 2022, the Strategic Transport Leadership Board agreed a general 5.1% increase in contributions towards EEH for the year ahead¹.
- 3.4. DfT’s contribution for 2022/23 represents a 50% uplift from the previous year, reflecting both EEH’s successes to date and the clear role that DfT sees STBs playing going forward. Based on the settlement provided, EEH expects to receive:
- | | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 | £1,350,000 |
| 2023/24 | £1,426,000 (indicative) |
| 2024/25 | £1,536,000 (indicative) |
- 3.5. DfT funds are to be spent on dedicated work streams, to be set by the EEH Board and agreed by DfT. In addition to funding programmes, Baroness Vere’s letter confirmed that from 2022/23 onwards DfT funding for STBs could be used to fund programme-level staff within the STB.
- 3.6. The ability to use DfT funds to support staff costs is to be welcomed. It enables EEH as an STB to strengthen our own capabilities and reduce our reliance on consultancy support. In line with the approach agreed by the Department for Transport, EEH business unit will build DfT-funded staff into individual work streams, creating project-specific posts who will be expected to deliver on the work stream priorities agreed by this Board.

4. EEH Business Plan 2022 - 2025

- 4.1. Going forward and following our recent governance review, EEH is in a good position to plan deliver an enhanced work programme. In February 2022, the Board also agreed to the framework on which the three-year business plan has been built.
- 4.2. To date, EEH has focused primarily on building the strategy, policy and evidence base required to identify investment priorities in the region. Over the immediate future, there remains a need to complete this – culminating in a clear investment pipeline and an evidence base to support it. Concurrently, and with our settlement now confirmed, EEH can start to move into a new phase of scheme development: bringing forward infrastructure priorities into investable propositions.
- 4.3. EEH will begin the development of early-stage strategic business cases for some of the region’s key priority schemes, as set out in a revised investment pipeline. An important first step for this work will be for the Board to consider and agree which schemes need to be prioritised first. Recognising the challenges this may bring, the business unit will work with local authorities, growth boards and LEPs to align priorities and to develop a robust yet proportionate prioritisation methodology that can help the Board to agree which schemes need to be developed through to an investment proposition sooner than others.
- 4.4. In agreeing the framework for the business plan, the Board has been clear in its view:
- a) that ambition for EEH should remain as it has been since its inception in 2015:

¹ There was not universal agreement or support at the Board for a 5.1% increase.

"A commitment from leaders across 13 local and combined authorities to harness the power of collaborative working on strategic connectivity issues to deliver their shared ambition – realising the economic potential of the region, while preserving and enhancing its natural and built environment"

- b) that there should remain a focus on digital connectivity as well as transport connectivity – to achieve a transition to net zero, the two are inextricably linked. The Board recognises that funding for digital connectivity must be delivered outside of the DfT programme and funding will need to be secured from an alternative source before further substantive work can be commissioned.
- c) that the regional transport strategy published in February 2021 provides the framework for a business plan that focuses on turning its policies into actions.

4.5. A copy of the three-year business plan is attached at Annex 1.

5. Work Programme 2022/23

- 5.1. Based on the business plan at Annex 1, and the priorities agreed by this Board for the year ahead in February 2022, Annex 2 sets out the programme of work for 2022/2023.
- 5.2. The priorities identified for the year ahead are based on their ability to draw together, and where necessary improve, the evidence base and policy framework already in place. In doing this, EEH will be in much stronger position to move towards its new area of focus: scheme development.
- 5.3. In addition to the work programme set out, EEH business unit staff will continue with completion of the programme of work set in place in 2021/22, including three connectivity studies, the Oxford to Cambridge Road study and a number of major projects that are being supported by DfT's in year funding.

6. Board Oversight

- 6.1. Given the growing volume and profile of the EEH work programme there is an increased need to ensure Board Members are able to oversee and steer our work, particularly capturing their own ambitions and expectations of EEH.
- 6.2. As a result, Board members are invited to consider the opportunity of creating Board Champions.
- 6.3. Board Champions will be individual board members who take a greater interest and profile in one or more of the topics being taken forward by EEH. They will oversee development of their priority area with greater engagement between them and EEH business unit staff in between Board meetings. The aspiration would be to keep the requirements of a Board Champion to a minimum and to be tailored to individual preferences.
- 6.4. If agreed, Board Champions would be in place for each of the themes in the business plan:
 - Regional Evidence Base
 - Planning for Net Zero
 - Improving Strategic Connectivity, including digital connectivity
 - Connectivity and Integration
 - Innovation
 - Regional scheme prioritisation and development, including funding models
 - Capacity and capability to deliver major infrastructure
- 6.5. Subject to Board approval, nominations and election of Board Champions will be agreed at the next meeting of the Board, in July 2022.

7. Regional Evidence Base

- 7.1. The EEH regional evidence base has been evolving since EEH's creation and comprises a suite of data and supporting study work which together form a detailed picture of the region and its connectivity challenges and opportunities.
- 7.2. A core principle of the evidence base is that it is freely available to all of EEH's partners. In December 2021, access was significantly improved and since then a number of partners have received dedicated demonstrations and briefings on the evidence base's capability.
- 7.3. A core factor in the success of the evidence base going forward is the breadth of its use and benefit. As a result, EEH business unit is seeking Board agreement to the evidence base being more accessible and freely available to partners in local planning authorities, growth boards and, where appropriate with the region's universities.

8. Connectivity Studies

- 8.1. A core part of the EEH work programme is the connectivity studies, as set out in the transport strategy.
- 8.2. The studies are multimodal studies, including digital connectivity. The outputs of the studies will inform the EEH investment pipeline.
- 8.3. The first two connectivity studies, 'Oxford-Milton Keynes' and 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford', commenced in 2021.
- 8.4. The third connectivity study, 'Swindon-Didcot-Oxford' has now commenced, working with local authorities in the study area.
- 8.5. A future programme of connectivity studies was outlined in the transport strategy. This was based on previous engagement activities and an assessment of corridors against indicators associated with the transport strategy's principles.
- 8.6. Using lessons learned from the ongoing studies, a revised future programme was proposed at the January 2022 Transport Officer Group meeting, and subsequently at the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in February 2022. Based on feedback at the Board, EEH business unit was asked to reconsider the proposals and present a revised proposal in May 2022.
- 8.7. The revised future programme proposal is attached to this paper in Annex 3 and sets out three proposed future study areas.
- 8.8. The proposed Thames Valley-Milton Keynes-Northampton corridor encompasses the previous corridors 'London-Bucks-MK-Northampton', 'Luton-Milton Keynes-Daventry' and 'Milton Keynes-Northampton'. The geography has a number of North South parallel corridors giving scope to think about North south movements in the West of the EEH region, this includes, but is not limited to, A5 and the West Coast Mainline.
- 8.9. The proposed Luton-Bedford-North Northants encompasses but is not limited to the A6, Midland Mainline and North Northants North-South movements.
- 8.10. The proposed Southern East West corridor incorporates the previous Watford-Aylesbury-Bicester corridor. The geography mirrors that in policy 12 of the transport strategy '*We will prioritise improvements to east-west connectivity to support economic activity and planned housing growth, including: a southern corridor that links Buckinghamshire with Hertfordshire, providing an orbital passenger transport route between the Chiltern Main Line and West Anglia Main Line*'.
- 8.11. EEH is aware that there are a number of existing studies in the area, the intention is to build on work underway by authorities, rather than re-do or undermine projects in development.
- 8.12. Practically, a revised programme would bring the benefits of:
 - An accelerated programme

- Fewer geographic overlaps in study areas (although taking a programme level approach to the studies overlaps in geographies can be managed).
- Larger geographies allow a focus on strategic movements and linking places of strategic importance

8.13. The Strategic Transport Leadership Board is asked to consider and agree the future programme of connectivity studies.

8.14. Based on the sequencing of the initial programme of connectivity studies, set out in the regional transport strategy, the proposed programme of studies in the revised programme is set out below. This programme is subject to confirmation based on procurement and project scoping.

Study	Year of commencement
Thames Valley – Milton Keynes – Northampton	2022/23
Southern East West corridor	2022/23
Luton – Bedford – North Northants	2023/24

8.15. Outputs from the first two studies ‘Milton Keynes – Oxford’ and ‘Peterborough – Northampton – Oxford’ will be presented to the Board in July 2022.

9. Stakeholder Implications

9.1. The views of a wider stakeholder audience provided a key role in shaping the regional transport strategy. As a result, the three-year business plan has assumed views fed into the transport strategy consultation process are captured already.

9.2. Given the significance of the programme to all constituent members, EEH business unit will work with senior officers, and the Transport Officer Group to develop the programme at each stage of its evolution.

9.3. The connectivity studies programme is supported by both steering groups (of local partners) and a wider stakeholder group – all of which will be set up for each study as it is commenced.

10. Next Steps

10.1. Subject to agreement, EEH will proceed with delivery of the work programme, including the connectivity studies.

10.2. Board champions will be agreed at the Board in July 2022

Naomi Green
Managing Director
May 2022

Annexes (all separate)

- 1: Three-year business plan**
- 2: 2022/23 work programme**
- 3: Connectivity studies**