

EEH Strategic Leadership Board

18 February 2022

Agenda Item 9: Long Term Railway Investment Priorities

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Receives a presentation from the Great British Railways Transition Team on their long-term ambitions for the railway**
- b) Provides Great British Railways Transition team with clarity over key priorities for rail investment in local areas**
- c) Considers and approve the draft response to the call for evidence for the Whole Industry Strategic Plan, a 30 year plan for rail (Annex 1)**

1. Context

- 1.1. On 9 December 2021, the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) launched a call for evidence to inform a 30-year rail plan, also known as the Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP).
- 1.2. This report introduces the call for evidence and provides a high-level summary of the proposed response from England's Economic Heartland. The full response from EEH is attached at Annex 1, for approval.
- 1.3. The call for evidence closed on 4 February 2022. To meet the deadline of the call for evidence, a draft response was submitted to GBRTT, with agreement that the final version of the submission would be sent following consideration by the EEH Strategic Transport Leadership Board.

2. Role of Great British Railways Transition Team

- 2.1. In May 2021, the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail' was published, laying out the government's plans for widespread rail industry reform.
- 2.2. As a result, the Great British Railways Transition Team was established to deliver Great British Railways, a new public body to run an integrated rail network, including:
 - Owning and managing the infrastructure (currently the role of Network Rail)
 - Contracting and specifying rail services (as part of the move away from franchises)
 - Acting as the 'single guiding mind' for the rail system.
- 2.3. Part of GBRTT's reform programme includes the development of a 30-year strategy for rail, also known as the Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP). This long term strategy aims to set the economic and social development direction of rail and will be informed by the call for evidence.

3. Draft EEH Response

- 3.1. A draft submission to the call for evidence has been prepared on behalf of the Board. The response sets out how the priorities set out in the regional transport strategy, as well as the outputs of the Rail Passenger Study and local partner cross-border priorities must all be considered as part of a long-term plan for rail.
- 3.2. The response emphasises the central role that rail has in creating the Heartland's wider transport system. It sets out rail as part of an integrated transport system that must form a strategic public transport network across the region.
- 3.3. In the context of rail being seen as part of a wider public transport system, EEH's response sets out our aspiration that the 30-year plan for rail must be more inclusive of other transport modes. By doing so, rail is much better placed to be part of the right transport solution for individual places. The need to integrate rail in the wider transport system is an issue for both passenger services and rail freight.
- 3.4. The draft response also sets out that the dominance of radial routes from London used to define rail regions has led to poor intraregional connectivity. The introduction of East West Rail, as well as other strategic public transport priorities in the Heartland, are all required if we are to achieve a step change in public transport in the region.
- 3.5. Additionally, EEH is keen to ensure that the structure of GBR is designed to deliver the outcomes of the 30-year plan. At present, EEH, and several local authority partners span more than one part of the Network Rail regional structure. Going forward, GBR needs to ensure that decisions taken are made for the benefit of the whole railway, not just the 'region' from which they are being planned.
- 3.6. The draft response sets out EEH's ambition for rail stations to function as mobility hubs for local communities and have the potential to become community hubs. In many places the bus and train serve different markets, so stations provide a key modal interchange function which need to be accessible and inclusive to all. This would be further enhanced through multimodal smart ticketing.
- 3.7. The response reiterates some of the key priorities for rail, as set out in the regional transport strategy. This includes the ambition to prioritise investment decisions on account of their environmental and sustainability benefits within the appraisal process, not just value for money.
- 3.8. Finally, the response makes specific reference to our long-standing commitment to improved east-west connectivity and strategic rail routes to unlock the economic potential of both the Heartland and neighbouring regions. East West Rail must be delivered in full, including the link to Aylesbury.

4. National Headquarters Competition

- 4.1. Separate to the call for evidence, GBRTT have opened the expression of interest in the competition for the national headquarters of Great British Railways. Expressions of interest should be submitted by 16 March 2022.
- 4.2. The eligibility to make an expression of interest is limited to local authorities and combined authorities. Sub-national transport bodies and local enterprise partnerships can support applications within their area, but not submit directly.
- 4.3. Given the prominence of Network Rail offices in parts of the Heartland region, the location of the GBR headquarters is a significant issue for the region. Local partners may wish to raise their views directly with GBRTT during the agenda item.

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