

East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board

11th December 2018

Agenda Item 5: Central Section

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Note the content of the briefing from the East West Railway Company
- b) Agree the proposed arrangements for preparing a response to the anticipated engagement on the Central Section

1. Context

- 1.1. The East West Rail Consortium commissioned work that led to the identification of a Conditional Output Statement for the Central Section (Bedford to Cambridge). That was the basis on which Network Rail had been taking work forward to identify a preferred corridor for the Central Section.
- 1.2. With the establishment of the East West Railway Company the work on the Central Section has been given fresh impetus. The Government's response to the National Infrastructure Commission has signalled its intent to accelerate the delivery of the Central Section – with a target date in the latter half of the 2020's now the ambition. Indeed Budget 2018 confirmed an additional £20m of funding to support the work required to develop the business case for the Central Section.
- 1.3. Responding to this commitment from Government the East West Railway Company has been reviewing the Strategic Objectives and Conditional Output Statement for the Central Section – in particular to ensure they are consistent with the framework used with the Western Section.
- 1.4. The Company has signalled that it is intending to undertake a round of engagement on the Central Section early in 2019.
- 1.5. The meeting will receive a briefing on this engagement from Will Gallagher.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1. As with the development of the Western Section it is important that through the Consortium we seek to develop a common position on the strategic aspects of the proposals put forward by the Company.

- 2.2. In seeking to develop a common position on the strategic issues this will not preclude individual members commenting in their own right. Experience suggests however that an agreed position on the part of the Consortium as a whole will strengthen our ability to influence and shape the route choice.
- 2.3. It is also important to bear in mind that any consideration of the options put forward by the Company need to be placed in the wider context of strategic transport investment requirements across the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge (and beyond) corridor as a whole.
- 2.4. In other words, there will be a need for all partners to recognise that consideration of the options for the Central Section needs to also consider other potential investments in strategic infrastructure. Other investment priorities may, for example, support the delivery of planned growth in ways that are similar to that achievable through East West Rail.
- 2.5. This Forum's consideration of the options for the Central Section may therefore identify other investment requirements, requirements that need to be fed into England's Economic Heartland's Strategic Transport Forum for consideration as part of the overarching Transport Strategy.
- 2.6. The EWR secretariat is putting in place arrangements that will enable the views of all partner organisations feed into and shape a draft position statement: one that will enable the Consortium to respond to the Company's consultation document.
- 2.7. It is envisaged that the Consortium will want to consider the merits of the corridor options but also the revisions to the Strategic Objectives and Conditional Output Statement.
- 2.8. Meetings at officer level are being set up in order to develop a draft position statement for the Consortium to consider at its next scheduled meeting in March 2019.
- 2.9. The engagement – which will be a non-statutory consultation – will be the first step in the journey towards developing the detail of the scheme and securing the necessary permission to build the Central Section (which will be through a Development Consent Order).

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