



East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board 9th December 2020

Agenda Item 4: Autumn Announcements

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Consider the implications of the Autumn Announcements for East West Rail**
- b) Consider and agree what action the Consortium will take in support of the delivery of East West Rail**

1. Context

- 1.1. Last month saw a number of significant announcements and publications by the Government that are relevant to the work of the East West Rail Consortium.
- 1.2. The publication of the Government's 10-Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution – launched by the Prime Minister on the 18th November – sets out the actions that the Government will promote in keeping with the commitment to deliver on the legal requirement to achieve net zero carbon no later than 2050.
- 1.3. The Plan includes as one of the 10-Points the need to deliver on investment in walking, cycling and public transport.
- 1.4. A week later on the 25th November the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented the outcome of a one-year Spending Review. At the same time the Government published its long-awaited National Infrastructure Strategy.
- 1.5. The National Infrastructure Summary included within its list of projects a commitment to deliver East West Rail.
- 1.6. The Spending Review confirmed funding to enable delivery of the Bicester to Bletchley section of the Western Section but was silent on the other elements of the Western Section – the link between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury (which in the longer term enables the services to link Northampton – Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common) and the Bletchley to Bedford section (the Marston Vale Line).

2. Commentary

- 2.1. The reaffirmation of East West Rail as a project of national significance is to be welcomed, all the more so given the statement by Government that it will prioritise investment away from London and the South East. The cessation of work on the development of Crossrail 2 is arguably an example of this emphasis having implications for the wider region.
- 2.2. The Consortium has a well-established position in that the East West Rail project (including improvements taken forward as the Eastern Section) needs to be delivered in full if it is to realise its potential to transform east-west connectivity.

- 2.3. The silence on the two outstanding components of the Western Section may simply be a question of timing. The East West Railway Company continues to work with local partners through the East West Rail Consortium to develop detailed proposals for both the Western Section and Central Section. However, delays in the delivery of the project – both in terms of individual elements and the overall project – will have consequences for the ability of partners to deliver planned levels of growth in a way that is sustainable.
- 2.4. Whilst it may be viewed that the announcement of funding to deliver Bicester to Bletchley demonstrates continued commitment by the Government to the project, the commitment to give greater priority to investment elsewhere is likely to mean that partners from across the region will need to re-make the case for East West Rail next year.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. The meeting is invited to consider and agree what action should be taken in support of the delivery of East West Rail.
- 3.2. In this it is invited to take into account the briefing from the East West Railway Company earlier on the agenda.

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December 2020