

Strategic Transport Forum

22nd June 2018

Agenda Item 5b: Cross Country Franchise

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Chairman is delegated to sign off the response to the consultation on the future of the Cross Country franchise.

1. Context

- 1.1. On 7th June the Department for Transport launched a consultation on the future of the Cross Country franchise ([Cross Country Franchise Consultation](#)).
- 1.2. The Cross Country franchise is the most extensive of all the rail franchises in Great Britain. It serves seven of Britain's biggest cities, many university towns and airports and operates through seven of the eight Network Rail routes.
- 1.3. All trains serve Birmingham New Street. Key routes of interest to the Heartland are services from the South Coast to the Midlands and beyond (which predominantly use the Reading – Oxford – Banbury corridor for part of their journey) and Birmingham to Stansted Airport services.
- 1.4. The consultation document highlights the potential for the Cross Country franchise to refine its current routes and serve new markets. Delivery of East West Rail and HS2 are identified as infrastructure projects that will have an impact on the opportunities to serve or connect to new destinations, and run additional trains on the current network.
- 1.5. The current franchise is due to expire in late 2019 and can be extended by up to one year.

2. Responding to the Consultation

- 2.1. Responses to the consultation are required by 30th August, which is before the next scheduled meeting of this Forum.
- 2.2. It is therefore proposed that the EEH Business Unit will work with the Transport Officers Support Group to develop a draft response to the consultation. This will be circulated to members of the Forum for their consideration and comment.
- 2.3. A final response will be prepared in light of comments received from Forum members. It is proposed that the Chairman of the Forum be empowered to sign off the response on behalf of the Forum in order to meet the consultation deadline.

Martin Tugwell
Programme Director

June 2018