

Strategic Transport Forum

24th March 2017

Agenda Item 5: A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvement

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Note the arrangements put in place to prepare a consultation response
- b) Agree that the Chairman be authorised to agree the consultation response on behalf of England's Economic Heartland

1. Background

- 1.1. At its meeting on 14th October 2016 the Strategic Transport Forum received a briefing on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme.
- 1.2. The scheme – which had been included within the first Road Investment Strategy as a priority for investment – looks to secure an improvement to one of the least reliable sections of the Strategic Road Network in the whole of the country.
- 1.3. The Forum resolved to:
 - a) *Support the need for investment to address the issues associated with the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet*
 - b) *Support the need for the investment made to be to a standard consistent with the longer-term ambition to realise an Expressway standard route between Oxford and Cambridge*
- 1.4. At the same meeting the Strategic Transport Forum agreed to publish its position statement – Planning for Growth. This identified five immediate investment priorities: one of which was the delivery of the proposed Oxford – Cambridge Expressway, of which the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement was seen as the next stage.
- 1.5. In November 2016 the National Infrastructure Commission published its Interim Report into the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor. The interim report highlighted the potential for the delivery of both the Expressway and East West Rail proposals to provide a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to establish a 'multi-modal spine' across the Heartland area.
- 1.6. The Government in its response to the NIC's Interim Report – through the 2016 Autumn Statement – allocated an additional £27m of revenue funding to enable development of the Expressway proposal to be taken forward. This work was in

addition to commitments already made through the first Road Investment Strategy.

2. Public Consultation

- 2.1. On 6th March Highways England launched a public consultation on route options to improve the A428 between Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet.
- 2.2. In embarking upon the public consultation Highways England sets out that it is at an early stage of developing the scheme, with further work needed to assess the feasibility of the scheme including detailed traffic modelling, environmental survey work and economic assessments.
- 2.3. Three routes are set out in the consultation material on which views are sought. In addition, three options for the Black Cat roundabout are presented. The consultation material can be found at: https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a428-black-cat-to-caxton-gibbet/supporting_documents/A428%20consultation%20brochure%201.pdf
- 2.4. The closing date for consultation responses is 23rd April.

3. Key Issues for the Strategic Transport Forum

- 3.1. It is important for England's Economic Heartland to respond to the consultation. The proposed scheme is already identified as one of five immediate investment priorities for the region.
- 3.2. Although a key focus for the scheme is the need to improve east-west connectivity, the scheme has significant implications for north-south movements along the A1(M) corridor between the M25 and Peterborough.
- 3.3. On the latter point it is important to be aware that the A1(M) corridor has itself been the subject of a strategic study as part of the current Road Investment Strategy. The next stage for that Strategic Study has yet to be determined by Highways England. It is therefore essential that in responding to this consultation the Strategic Alliance takes into account the output to date from that Study.
- 3.4. In responding to this consultation it is also important to bear in mind the potential benefits to be derived from delivery of East West Rail. As the NIC Interim Report has already highlighted investment in both the Expressway and East West Rail is required in order to realise the step change in connectivity that is necessary in order to enable economic opportunities to be realised.

4. Responding to the Consultation

- 4.1. Given the timing of the consultation it is proposed that the Strategic Alliance's response is prepared by working with the local transport authorities most directly affected by the scheme – the strategic importance of the scheme having already been agreed by this Forum.
- 4.2. Members of the Forum are invited to identify key issues that they wish to be considered in preparing a Strategic Alliance response. These will be fed into the working group tasked with preparing the consultation response.
- 4.3. The meeting is asked to agree that the Chairman of the Forum 'sign off' the consultation response on behalf of the Forum.

Martin Tugwell
Programme Director

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