Strategic Transport Forum

15th May 2020

Agenda Item 3: Transport Strategy

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum:

a) **Consider and comment on the draft Transport Strategy (Annex 2), including the full suite of policies that are at its core.**

b) **Specifically considers the policies and narrative around: de-carbonisation, the rural economy, the hierarchy of travel modes, and freight and logistics.**

1. Context

1.1. The draft Transport Strategy sets the policy framework for strategic transport provision and investment in the Heartland region over the next 30 years. This Forum will be asked to approve the Strategy for publication at its meeting scheduled for 19th June. This will then allow it to be published for consultation on 14th July 2020.

1.2. In January 2020 the Forum considered and agreed the vision and key principles that set the framework for the way the Strategy has been developed.

1.3. That meeting also considered the key messages arising from the engagement on the Outline Transport Strategy. Responses to the Outline Transport Strategy form part of the Regional Evidence Base as they set out the expectations and ambitions of people who live and work in the region. The imperative to decarbonise the transport system came through particularly strongly in the engagement responses.

1.4. The development of the Transport Strategy has been based on a Regional Evidence Base: a summary of what this comprises is set out in Annex 1. The Regional Evidence Base is comprehensive in nature and has been designed to be used not just for the preparation of the transport strategy but also to create a suite of tools that all partners can use in taking forward its implementation.

1.5. Building on the Forum's previous discussions, and reflecting outputs from the Regional Evidence Base, the EEH Business Unit has produced a full draft of the Transport Strategy.

1.6. To reach this point, the strategy have been shared and developed in partnership with the Transport Officers Group. It has also been shared informally with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Highways England.

1.7. In order to capture a wider range of views and to provide an additional layer of challenge, EEH Business Unit has created an Influencers Group. The group is formed of a range of stakeholders with a broad range of expertise, many of whom contributed valuable insight during the engagement. The vision and principles and the policies within the Future of Transport chapter, have also been tested with this group.

1.8. Forum members will also be aware of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the draft Transport Strategy that is underway concurrently. The ISA is considering ways in which the Transport Strategy can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and

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economic conditions and provides a means of identifying and mitigating any potential adverse effects arising from the Strategy.

1.9. The ISA is working alongside the development of the Transport Strategy allowing us to challenge our Strategy against the sustainability outcomes of the ISA. This iterative approach is allowing continual improvement to the draft Transport Strategy.

1.10. The draft ISA will be presented alongside the final draft of the Transport Strategy to the Forum at its June meeting: it will be published alongside the draft Strategy for its own consultation.

2. The Draft Transport Strategy

2.1. The draft Transport Strategy is presented at Annex 2 for consideration and comment.

2.2. The vision and key principles of the draft Strategy have evolved since last considered by the Forum, to reflect the evidence base and to take on board comments to date. The draft also reflects the challenges and opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3. In addition to seeking the Forum's comments on the document as a whole, there are a number of aspects where the Forum's steer is sought:

a) *Strategically Important Locations* – drawing on the output from the Opportunities Mapping it is proposed that the Transport Strategy identify a number of locations as being of strategic importance:

- Regionally Significant Hubs – our largest urban areas, centres of economic activity in their own right and where additional growth is planned.
- Areas of Economic Opportunity – areas that form the focus of economic opportunities moving forward, a combination of existing centres of activity and new opportunities (including Enterprise Zones)
- Areas of Significant Change – existing urban areas where the scale of planned growth is significant relative to their size
- Areas of Potential – areas where intervention is required to improve social equality and access to opportunities

The resulting list of locations is set out in paragraph 3.41 of the draft Strategy: annex 3 shows these locations on our base map.

b) *Decarbonisation* – the need to decarbonise the transport system and meet the national net zero target are key drivers for change and as such have shaped the draft Strategy. Paragraphs 5.1 to 5.30 of the draft Strategy set this out in more detail.

The draft recognises that there is an expectation on the part of many partners and stakeholders to achieve net-zero carbon earlier than 2050. Action by Government in respect of ending the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans is welcome. However we start from a place in our region where transport's contribution towards carbon emissions is significantly higher and the rate of decline in emissions is noticeably lower than national averages, presenting the Heartland with a greater challenge than other areas.

Transport-related emissions in the Heartland rose 10% between 2012-2017, the national figure was 5% nationally. In 2017 the Heartland's transport emissions equated to 47% of the region's total carbon dioxide emissions, the national figure was 37%. It is notable that in those parts of our region with the highest CO_2 emissions, transport as a proportion of total emissions is also high.

The evidence is clear: for our region Government measures alone will not be sufficient to enable us to meet the legal requirement by 2050. Moreover our ability to meet that requirement earlier than 2050 will be dependent upon a number of external factors (changes in the delivery models used by businesses for their services and products), along with decision taken in other areas of public policy that affect the planning, development and delivery of services.

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It is in this broader context that the Forum is invited to comment on the draft policies on decarbonisation.

c) *The Rural Economy* – with 34% of EEH's population living in small market towns and their rural hinterlands (compared to a national average of 24%), connectivity in rural areas is a strategic issue that needs to be addressed by the Transport strategy. GVA in the Heartland's 12 majority rural local planning authorities (as defined by DEFRA) amounted to £41bn in 2018: more than a quarter of the Heartland's total GVA

Rural communities face a number of connectivity challenges including:

- Access to digital connectivity, which is critical for businesses based in our rural communities, yet the cost of its provision can be a barrier to making the required investment
- The digital economy, which is encouraging new business models for consumer goods and new ways of accessing services and facilities, creating challenges for the future of our small market towns
- Traditional business models for providing public transport in rural areas becoming increasingly unsustainable, leading to the reduction, and in some instances removal, of services.

Rural connectivity is discussed in the draft Strategy in paragraphs 7.20 to 7.26

d) *Hierarchy of Modes* – the driver here is to ensure that when detailed proposals are being developed they are done so in a way that reduces reliance on the private car by considering the needs of users on the basis of a hierarchy of modes. In this way the hierarchy supports the need to meet the net zero requirement by looking to make active travel and public transport the first choice for travel. A consequential increase in investment in local measures would contribute towards improving the health and well-being of individuals. Such an approach would also support partners wishing to pursue the application of 'vision zero' principles at the local level.

The hierarchy of modes needs to be equally applied to the existing infrastructure asset. A failure to maintain the existing asset has a direct impact on the productivity of businesses in our region. Investment in maintaining the asset offers the opportunity to use the hierarchy to re-purpose the available space in favour of modes that support a more sustainable pattern of development.

The hierarchy of modes is discussed in the draft Strategy in paragraphs 5.31 to 5.55

e) Freight and Logistics – the continued success and growth of our economy is dependent upon our businesses and people having access to goods and services. Our work to identify the pathways to decarbonisation has highlighted that freight and logistics is the largest contributor to carbon emissions. Experience shows that it is also the most difficult transport from for identifying and implementing solutions to reduce carbon emissions.

The draft Strategy encourages greater use of rail for freight and logistics in response to this challenge, however it also acknowledged that road haulage will remain an important part of the freight and logistics sector.

Freight and logistics is discussed in the draft Strategy in paragraphs 8.5 to 8.26

3. Next Steps.

3.1. Comments on the draft Strategy received at this meeting will be used to prepare the final draft for the Forum's consideration and approval at the meeting on 19th June.

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May 2020

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Regional Evidence Base

The Regional Evidence Base provides the evidential basis for the development of this strategy. It comprises:

• GIS-based Databank – containing up to date information on known plans for growth (economic and housing): the databank is updated annually using information supplied by local planning authorities and local enterprise partnerships

• Policy Scenario Model – a regional model that is used to assess the relative implications of alternative scenarios. The model has the ability to consider both alternative development scenarios (scale and distribution of future growth) and alternative policy scenarios. Its back-casting ability enables the interventions required to achieve a particular outcome to be explored

• Population Segmentation – part of the output from a technical study linked with First Mile/Last Mile project, this provides insight into the behaviours of the region's residents in a way that complements this Strategy's user-centred focus

• Pathway to Decarbonisation – making use of the National Infrastructure Systems Model (NISMOD) to inform this Strategy's approach to de-carbonising our transport system

• Outline Transport Strategy – the responses submitted provide insight on the key issues this strategy needs to address for our residents and businesses

• Technical Studies – the output of technical work commissioned to explore specific aspects of our transport system

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