



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

Minutes

15 July 2022

Best Western Hotel, Buckingham

Attendees:

Cllr Richard Wenham (Chair)	Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Liz Leffman (Vice Chair)	Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Dave Hodgson	Mayor, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Emily Darlington	Cabinet member, Milton Keynes Council
Cllr Graham Lawman	Executive member, North Northants Council
Cllr Phil Larratt	Cabinet member, West Northants Council
Cllr Robert Roche	Executive member, Luton Council
Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Leader, Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr David Renard	Leader, Swindon Borough Council

Apologies:

Cllr Wayne Fitzgerald	Peterborough Council
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EEH Team Members Present:

Naomi Green	Managing Director
Suzanne Winkels	Principal Technical Lead
Fiona Foulkes	Business Manager
Abi Nichols	Project Lead
Trevor Brennan	Project Lead
Nathalie Mazhunga	Project Officer
Adam King	Communications and Policy Manager
Bronwyn Marshall	Executive Coordinator

1	Introductions
	Richard Wenham (RW) opened the meeting and asked attendees if they were content with accuracy of previous meeting minutes.
	Phil Larratt (PL) sought correction to the first paragraph on page 4. <i>It should read 'Cllr Larratt said he was pleased with the Thames Valley study because of the importance of connectivity from West Northamptonshire to Luton and the airport.'</i>
	Cllr Robert Roche (RR) corrected OVEZ to OZEV on page 4 and corrects 15 Million to 50 Million on page 5.

	Naomi Green (NG) ran through actions and confirmed all were complete or in hand.
2	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>Gerry Sansom (GS), CPRE Bedfordshire provided a statement to outline CPRE position re development across Oxford to Cambridge Arc and East West Rail. The statement is below:</p> <p><i>Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, My name is Gerry Sansom - I represent CPRE Bedfordshire the Countryside Charity. I am taking the opportunity to make this statement to the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in order to outline CPRE's position and that of our Town & Parish Council members, regarding development across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc and the development of East West Rail, a subject which features on your Agenda this morning. I expect that this statement will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.</i></p> <p><i>First though an introduction to the current environmental background against which decisions regarding development across the Ox – Cam Arc are taken: - It is now recognised by the UN and others that the UK is now one of the most nature depleted countries on the planet. - Bird and insect populations have declined by around 70% since the 1970's and this decline continues at pace! - The humble Starling at one time a commonly seen bird across the UK is now on the RSPB "red list". - Climate Change is upon us and an example of what we will experience is with us today – abnormally high temperatures and potential drought. - The Oxford - Cambridge Arc is an area with serious water supply issues. - Our Sewage System is in crisis and unable to support the current housing stock let alone any substantial housing increase. 2 of 3 A very serious situation I'm sure you'll all agree and yet despite this, major decisions are being taken about development across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc in the absence of any detailed Environmental Impact Assessments.</i></p> <p><i>Today, you will be discussing the "East West Rail Strategic Narrative"- as far as we can see, there is no accompanying Environmental Assessment to this very important document. CPRE strongly supports East West Rail but we see it as a means of providing a sustainable transport option for existing communities across the Arc, reducing carbon emissions and congestion on the road network together with a significant reduction in road freight journeys. We do not see East West Rail as a means of urbanising the entire OxfordCambridge Arc causing immense environmental destruction. One of the key features of the East/West Rail Narrative is that East West Rail will: Support Substantial Sustainable Housing Growth The Narrative states that: "The National Infrastructure Commission has been clear that currently the supply of housing in the region does not meet demand, and describe the situation as rapidly reaching a 'crisis point'. It goes on to say: "Related to supply issues, house prices in parts of the region have become unaffordable for most of the population..."</i></p> <p><i>The solution therefore, according to the report is additional housing to offset the shortage – fair enough! – additional housing could, without any further change solve the problem. BUT, at the same time, according to the E/W Rail Narrative, the strategy is to encourage a huge growth of businesses into the OX- Cam Arc bringing with them even more population growth. The result of course, of encouraging even more businesses to relocate to the Arc, will be to create a massive upward vicious circle of increasing population growth, leading to further increases in housing prices, leading to local people being priced out of the market, leading to more housing development etc. etc. and on and on it goes. 3 of 3 The only people that will benefit from this strategy are landowners and developers who will be rubbing their hands with glee as land and house prices massively escalate.</i></p> <p><i>This is precisely the strategy, which was promoted by CBRE, the massive American land and property speculator. CBRE was given the stage by England's Economic Heartland at the launch of your Transport Strategy a couple of years back. It is the</i></p>

	<p><i>CBRE strategy which has made the US Silicon Valley into one of the most expensive places to live in the US and it's what will happen across the Oxford Cambridge Arc if this unsustainable housing growth strategy is followed by England's Economic Heartland and East/West Rail.</i></p> <p><i>We were very hopeful when England's Economic Heartland and the Transport Forum, now the Transport Leadership Group, was formed, that developments would be based on environmentally sustainable strategies. Our confidence was shaken when the New A6 – M1 Link Road was agreed - the road that will slice through the Bedfordshire Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – 1 of just 30 such AONB's in England – adversely impacting 2 hugely important ancient woodlands planted prior to 1600, rich in biodiversity. An example, we say, of Environmental Vandalism! We very much hope that this Leadership Board will indeed be "Leaders" and take the opportunity to change direction. CPRE believes that a more sensible way forward would be to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop a National Industrial and Housing Development Strategy which encourages a more equitable spread of development and population growth across the country.</i> • <i>Prioritise areas that are most in need of job creation, not contribute to the overdevelopment of the already overheated South and South East</i> <p><i>Thank you for your time this morning. G Sansom CPRE Bedfordshire</i></p> <p>RW acknowledged the statement and agreed to circulate it in writing as part of the Board minutes.</p> <p>Alan Francis, Member of Milton Keynes green party raised three queries about East West Rail (EWR)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re service to Aylesbury – the TWAQ stated that single track railway could support EWR; however, Network Rail now suggests that this would not be sufficient. Has EEH challenged this? 2. EEH has spoken about Aylesbury to Milton Keynes being extended to Northampton., but this is not captured in the narrative report. 3. Secretary of State for Transport recently commented that he would drop second and third stages of EWR if elected Prime Minister. Some commentators have taken that as ministerial decision. Can EEH confirm that EWR to Cambridge is still on? <p>Chris Cole (CC), Network Rail (NR) clarified that NR believes there is value in a link to Aylesbury.</p> <p>NG clarified that the East West Main Line Partnership (EWMLP) is undertaking further study work at Aylesbury, which is referred to in the Network Rail strategic statement. If Northampton – Aylesbury has been omitted, EEH would seek a correction.</p> <p>RW clarified that the comment made by then Secretary of State for Transport was made in the context of a leadership campaign and therefore, for clarity, was not considered to be a ministerial direction.</p>
3	<p>Department for Transport Update (DfT)</p> <p>Andy Rhind (AR), from Department for Transport provided the DfT update, emphasising that during the prime ministerial election period, the focus remains on delivering established policy rather than new decisions. It was clarified that the Secretary of State's comments on East West Rail did not constitute a policy decision</p>

	<p>and there will be no major policy announcements until after the new prime minister has been elected.</p> <p>The Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) was expected to be published pre-recess. All of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding has been allocated.</p> <p>The meeting expressed its disappointment at the BSIP funding outcome. In addition:</p> <p>Martin Tett (MT) highlighted the challenges of bus provision in a predominantly rural county, in particular connecting local people to employment opportunities.</p> <p>Liz Leffman (LL) emphasised ongoing concerns over COVID and the reluctance of older people to use buses. Local bus companies required reassurance around what will happen once the bus recovery grant has ended in September. AR recognised that concessionary travel was a 'live issue' in government – though no funding has been allocated yet, information would be fed to ministers.</p> <p>Graham Lawman (GL) stated that a single authority receiving £167 million allocation was unfair. GL further stressed the need for revenue funding certainty, such as through bus subsidies, as the current stopping of services is resulting in isolation.</p> <p>PL added that bus operators have withdrawn two-thirds of bus services in Northamptonshire, highlighting that access to further education for young people was a particular issue in rural West Northamptonshire.</p> <p>Emily Darlington (ED) stated that the cost of running single bus has increased 63%, reflecting a broader economic issue, given 12 years of budget cuts to local authorities. ED called for funding of both rural and urban buses as part of the wider zero carbon future approach.</p> <p>AR advised that this was being looked at as a structural issue.</p> <p>Robert Roche (RR) said Luton received funding but acknowledged that the funding allocation creates inequality across the region.</p> <p>Dave Hodgson (DR) raised the issue of bus companies struggling to get drivers, contributing to inconsistent services. This meant people were less likely to use buses in the future, opting instead for another method i.e. car, thus undermining the bus services strategy.</p> <p>ACTION: EEH to write to the Department for Transport to highlight the Board's concerns regarding the BSIP allocation within the region.</p>
4	<p>Oxford – Cambridge Road Study</p> <p>NG explained the background of the Oxford-Cambridge Road Study and welcomed Richard Leonard (RL), National Highways to present the emerging findings.</p> <p>RL presented the methodology, outcomes and emerging findings from the study, i.e. the 16 areas of priority. This will be used to support a strategic consideration of potential investment portfolio. A detailed issue and options report is being developed for each location, which will be shared once completed.</p> <p>The Board generally supported the work carried out on the Oxford to Cambridge Roads Connectivity study to date, including identification of the priority areas.</p>

	<p>MT raised concerns that Wing and Waddesdon are not currently identified for improvements but are known heavily congested 'through villages'. He suggested and agreed to continue to review the need for intervention in these places, seeking regular monthly progress updates from EEH Officers. RL responded acknowledging that although they are not being flagged by the current data sets, these were known pressure points that would be discussed.</p> <p>Tim Bellamy (TB), CPCA raised the A1 and A47 as roads to be considered.</p> <p>LL highlighted that there is a need to recognise what local areas want the roads to do – for example, the Oxford ring road is a local route, frequently used for travel to hospitals. LL further encouraged the study to consider active travel and bus improvements.</p>
	<p>Connectivity Studies Packages</p> <p>Abi Nichols (AN) provided background on the connectivity studies tranche 1.</p> <p>The Board agreed that elements of package 1 (particularly demand management) would be challenging for some local communities. It was emphasised that the study should make it clear in the package and narrative of the report that measures should be tailored locally.</p> <p>GL asked about the potential of an active travel route using a disused railway between Northampton and Wellingborough. EEH committed to looking back at the package to see if and how this has been assessed through the study process.</p> <p>ED highlighted that additional road capacity may be needed in some locations to facilitate the shift to active and sustainable modes of travel.</p> <p>PL asked about interventions for Long Buckby station. Long Buckby forms part of the geography of a future study and therefore, interventions suggested through the first studies have been included for consideration in future studies.</p> <p>LL noted that facilities for charging HGVs by alternatives fuels should be considered.</p>
6	<p>Innovation</p> <p>NG sent apologies for James Golding-Graham and presented the paper on innovation.</p> <p>EEH's ambition is to support sustainable growth, improve quality of life and wellbeing through decarbonised transport via the region's global expertise in technology and innovation with the aim to unlock new opportunities for residents and businesses, to benefit the UK.</p> <p>EEH has committed in the 2022/23 business plan to directly support the development offunding bids to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), ADEPT and Department for Transport innovation funding streams. The allocated funding aims to support the development of three multi-authority funding bids in 2022/23.</p> <p>EEH will implement a more proactive approach to maximising innovation opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ building effective, market led partnerships ○ harnessing the opportunity to trial new solutions ○ thought leadership and sector opportunity.

	<p>EEH will continue to investigate the development of a memorandum of understanding with the Connected Places Catapult and strive to develop a closer working relationship with private sector mobility innovation community in the region.</p> <p>In response to EEH strengthening relationships with local universities, RR suggests that the University of Bedfordshire should be included within the work on innovation.</p> <p>Phil Bibby (PB) asked that the text can be changed to state 'low emissions vehicles' rather than electric as it's understood that electric cannot be the answer to everything.</p> <p>The Board agreed with the proposed approach to innovation and will provide guidance on the focus of the Innovation Working Group through board champion engagement.</p>
7	<p>Board Champions</p> <p>In May 2022, members of the Strategic Transport Leadership Board agreed to the creation of board champions, to provide additional oversight of delivery of the EEH work programme and business plan, particularly steering the work in priority areas. The individual board champions will be appointed for a period of 18 months to lead a defined theme within the work programme (Dec 2023)</p> <p>Emily Darlington appointed Board Champion of Innovation Graham Lawman proposed Board Champion of Strategic Connectivity (to be confirmed) Martin Tett proposed Board Champion of Connectivity and Integration (to be confirmed) Mayor Dave Hodgson proposed Board Champion of Capacity and Capability (to be confirmed)</p> <p>RW highlighted that there are other areas of focus that will require Board Champions and encouraged fellow members to consider self-nominating for an area of interest.</p>
8	<p>East West Rail</p> <p>Trevor Brennan (TB) provided an update on the Strategic Narrative and previously agreed work by the Board with EWR.</p> <p>Work on the narrative had included reviewing housing and economic growth within local plan along the proposed EWR station/route and meeting with local authority local plan teams to discuss and consider EWR in terms of planning and transport.</p> <p>Work was also underway to consider options for strategic modelling that might support the strategic narrative.</p> <p>The business advocacy brochure, commissioned by East West Mainline Partnership was in final draft, once agreed will be shared with stakeholders (Government, MPs, EWR etc) in September.</p> <p>A separate piece of work to support to business case for the Aylesbury Link had been agreed by EW Main Line Partnership and EEH, further updates will be provided once work has been commissioned.</p> <p>The Board provided feedback on the draft strategic narrative – particular concerns were raised around clarity of messaging. The Board did not agree to sign-off on the draft and requested a redrafted version that provided greater clarity over the links</p>

	<p>between East West Rail, economic growth and the creation of sustainable links with communities.</p>
9	<p>Rail Reform Legislation</p> <p>Fiona Foulkes (FF) introduced the paper on Rail Reform Legislation. The Department for Transport is consulting on changes required in primary legislation to achieve the William-Shapps Plan for Rail. The key recommendation in the paper was that STBs should be formally recognised in primary legislation as a partner organisation to GBR, regardless of statutory status.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Transport has a duty under the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 to have regard to STB transport strategies – this is not currently reflected in either rail or highways legislation. Due to proposed transfer of franchising authority from the Secretary of State for Transport to Great British Railways, it is critical that the 2016 duty is maintained for both organisations.</p> <p>Further, FF recommended that STBs should be engaged in determining high-level output statements and passenger service contract specifications for operators to meet the needs of region. Clarity was needed over where the overall accountability for strategic planning will rest.</p> <p>The Board asked for clarification on what is meant by the recommendation to broaden the definition of accessibility within the proposed consultation response. FF clarified that whilst 'hard' accessibility can be considered in terms of disability as well as better access for passengers with luggage, young children or elderly people, a more holistic view of accessibility could also consider how rail travel could be made viable for people on lower incomes such as through fare reforms to connect more deprived communities.</p> <p>The Board agreed with the recommendation that STBs should be recognised in primary legislation and requested a consultation response be drafted in line with the paper. Clarity was sought over the recommendation to seek appropriate legal guidance – NG explained that this would be joint with the other STBs to draft an appropriate clause within the new legislation and would only be done if necessary.</p>
10	<p>Business Unit Update</p> <p>Suzanne Winkels (SW) provided the business unit update. This included:</p> <p>Following the Board's agreement of phase 1 of the active travel strategy in February, phase 2 is now underway. EEH have been liaising with DfT and Active Travel England on the scope for this piece of work.</p> <p>Work is being done on the viability of reinstating the Varsity Way cycle route. Consideration of funding opportunities is underway, as well as opportunities to extend the study to include different route assessment and improvements.</p> <p>The DfT's future of rural transport strategy is anticipated to be released in spring 2023. EEH has responded to the call for evidence.</p> <p>Several changes have been made to e-scooter legislation and regulation. EEH awaits the publication of the e-scooter trial data.</p> <p>MRN bids are being progressed with DfT and National Highways. The publication of National Highways' upcoming Route Strategies have been delayed until Autumn.</p>

A joint letter has been written to Ministers emphasising the need to prioritise capacity enhancements at Ely Junction as part of rail freight commitments.

EEH conference is on the 16th November at Stadium MK, Milton Keynes. Register for tickets <https://www.worldclassheartland.com/>

EEH are delighted that Suzanne Winkels has been appointed to the role of Principal Technical Lead permanently, and that the National Networks Lead (Rail and Freight) will be arriving in October.