



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

1 December 2023

Agenda Item 8: Business Unit update

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

a) Notes the consultation responses sent by EEH on behalf of our local authority partners:

- **NPPF Planning Policy Changes**
- **Update on TfL Day Travel Cards Consultation**
- **Freight Call for Evidence**

b) Receive updates on:

- **EEH Conference Feedback**
- **Q2 Business Report**
- **Rural Transport Strategy Update**

1. Consultation on plan-making reforms

- 1.1. Following an update to the September board on key matters for consideration, EEH submitted its response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' consultation on implementation of plan making reforms, the deadline for which was 18 October.
- 1.2. In line with the key points highlighted in September, the response focused on answering the questions most relevant to the role of EEH as a sub-national transport body, acknowledging that many of the questions were focused on planning process, and hence more relevant for statutory planning authorities to answer.
- 1.3. In summary, the response highlighted the following key points:
 - Support for local plans to develop a vision, including ensuring appropriate links to transport and infrastructure planning are acknowledged as part of this
 - Support for local plans to follow a more structured process, including that any common templates for project documents signpost to wider relevant policy and evidence such as that produced by sub-national transport bodies
 - The opportunities to use wider evidence, including tools and evidence base produced by sub-national transport bodies, to assist with local plan development alongside complementary work
 - The need for any updated guidance on local plan development and use of evidence base to recognise the strong linkages between land use and the planning of transport infrastructure and how planning policy can best be developed alongside planning for major infrastructure improvements. Any such guidance should also acknowledge the spatial context, for example differences between rural and urban areas.

- 1.4. The Board will be updated on any further implications for EEH workstreams as relevant national guidance comes forward.

2. Update on London Day Travel Cards

- 2.1. EEH responded to Transport for London's consultation on its proposal to remove Day Travel Cards, setting out several concerns around how it would disadvantage many people travelling into London.
- 2.2. Following EEH's representation, alongside that of many others, in October it was announced that day travel cards will be maintained after a deal was agreed between Transport for London (TfL), train operators and the government.

3. Call for evidence – freight in the planning system

- 3.1. The DfT and DLUHC put out a call for evidence into the relationship between the freight and logistics sector and the planning system.
- 3.2. Whilst EEH does not directly engage with the planning system, we met with our freight officers and agreed that in addition to individual authorities submitting their own evidence, we would also provide a high level response.
- 3.3. The primary objective of this call for evidence was to seek views so that the planning needs of the freight and logistics sector can be properly and effectively considered. Our response provided an overview of the key challenges, as we understand them from our partners, and set out how EEH, with our strong evidence base and strategic sub-national oversight can provide an opportunity to identify and support planning for infrastructure that will help guide freight to the right routes and modes.
- 3.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) currently provides limited guidance on freight and logistics, proposing that new developments should "allow for the efficient delivery of goods".
- 3.5. Discussions with our partners via our Freight Officer Group has identified an opportunity for more detailed guidance from Government, as well as more consistent engagement with the industry to understand demand and trends.
- 3.6. Our response reflected the feedback received from officers.

4. EEH Conference

- 4.1. The EEH annual conference took place on 1 November in Cambridge Guildhall, attended by more than 200 delegates.
- 4.2. The event showcased the work of EEH, its local authorities and that of agencies such as National Highways, Great British Railways and East West Railway Company.
- 4.3. It included panel discussions, featuring several of our Board members, alongside 'breakout' events on EEH and local authority work. Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner gave an opening address, while EEH Managing Director interviewed Milton Keynes MP and Chair of the Transport Committee, Iain Stewart.
- 4.4. The conference received very positive feedback in a post-event survey, with 89% rating it as 'good to excellent', and an average score of 3.89 out of five for how it improved understanding of England's Economic Heartland.
- 4.5. Sessions most highly rated included the breakouts, Chair's speech, MP sessions and the discussions around Ely and East West Rail.
- 4.6. Planning for next year's event is already underway, when we plan to give more time for networking opportunities and launch a number of EEH documents. We welcome Board member's feedback and ideas for 2024.

5. 2023/24 Quarter 2 Programme Update

- 5.1. EEH has now received our DfT grant of £1.35 million and continues to receive 2023/23 contributions from partners (partner contributions for year-end are forecast as £499,618). Funding contributions from local partners are a vital part of EEH's ability to leverage support from Government but also to ensure we can provide the suite of support to partners that we are keen to do.



- 5.2. EEH continues to provide secretariat for the East West Main Line Partnership and has received a contribution of £30,600 from the partnership to manage this function.
- 5.3. Due to the increased workload from our success in securing in-year funding in 2022/23 and staffing constraints, EEH entered 2023/24 with a tail of programme commitments. A large proportion of the 2022/23 programme is now complete or committed.
- 5.4. The 2023/24 work programme, previously agreed by Board in September 2023, is shown in annex 1, alongside status update as of end of Quarter 2.
- 5.5. EEH continues to work with the Department for Transport to ensure that the programme is well managed and delivered on time.

6. Rural Transport Strategy

- 6.1. In October 2023, the Department for Transport published a policy paper, 'Future of Transport: Helping local authorities unlock the benefits of technology and innovation in rural transport'.
- 6.2. The document follows a call for evidence in 2020 to help understand the needs of rural areas. England's Economic Heartland responded to the call for evidence highlighting the following challenges in our response:
 - lack of digital connectivity
 - realisation of the opportunities for innovation
 - traditional business models being unsustainable for rural public transport
 - lack of safe walking and cycling facilities and the opportunities for mobility hubs.
- 6.3. The themes which arose from the national call for evidence included poor access to services in rural areas, a lack of genuine choice for completing journeys, heightened loneliness and isolation and commercial challenges for operators due to long distances and sparse populations.
- 6.4. The Future of Transport paper is split into four themes:
 - Importance of rural roads for everyday journeys (with a focus on road maintenance and innovative approaches to road maintenance)
 - Improving services and greater choice (with a focus on EV charging)
 - Driving towards a sustainable future (with a focus on bus services, active travel (including ebikes) and community rail)
 - Enabling innovation in rural mobility (with a focus on demand responsive transport, shared mobility, autonomous vehicles and digital systems and data)
- 6.5. The paper outlines a series of pledges including sharing best practices, practical advice for LAs and operators and engaging with local leaders.
- 6.6. There is little new funding associated with the paper. However, the Government has pledged to make £3 million available for innovation that tackles rural challenges over 23/24 and 24/25.

**EEH Business Unit
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