



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This note provides a brief update on the progress of a number of strategic transport infrastructure projects reported previously to Team East Sussex.

2.0 Rail

High Speed Rail Economic Study

- 2.1 East Sussex, Hastings, Rother and Eastbourne commissioned Mott MacDonald to update the 2015 study on the economic impact of high speed rail in East Sussex. The updated study which was presented at the Hastings Rail Summit in early Oct 2017 identifies that high speed rail would be a potential game changer for the local economy and will:
- transform connectivity and image of the area with reduced journey times;
 - support the growth in London and the South East with improved connectivity with the capital critical to economic prosperity; and
 - act as a catalyst for economic growth attracting investment and ensuring the area is a more desirable place to live and work leading to lower out-migration of skilled labour and in-migration of higher earners.
- 2.2 By markedly improving the connectivity of East Sussex, high speed rail will transform the economic growth prospects of the area via three key channels, by:
- supporting business investment and growth;
 - provision of new commuting opportunities and thereby stimulating housing growth; and
 - visitor economy and growth.
- 2.3 Taking into account all benefits assessed for East Sussex, the high speed rail service could provide economic benefits in the range of £711.2m of GVA (£459.9m for East Sussex and £285.6m nationally in total over a 30 year time horizon) and 1,290 jobs per annum once all benefits are realised. The previous study identified £354m of local benefits and £123.7m of national benefits.

Infrastructure to enable High Speed Rail

- 2.4 Network Rail has identified a new incremental approach to bringing forward the infrastructure work required to enable high speed rail into East Sussex. The first phase focuses on taking advantage of planned track renewal to the Ashford West junction at Christmas 2020 to also enhance the junction to enable access between the high speed link to the Marshlink line via Platform 2 at Ashford International.
- 2.5 At a meeting on 3 Nov 2017 in Ashford, the Secretary of State for Transport indicated that DfT/NR would pay half the cost of the design/development works for the enhancement of the Ashford West junction. We, along with the other local authorities will contribute the remaining cost.
- 2.6 This design work will be completed by summer 2018 and will provide a firmer indication of the implementation cost. A series of meetings has been set up with Network Rail over the coming months (Kent and us to attend) as they progress the design work.
- 2.7 The second phase of infrastructure works would focus on journey time benefits from line speed improvements, whilst the third phase would be potential electrification but this is largely dependent on the rolling stock and there is more of a push towards bi-mode trains (electric/diesel) as electrification will be cost prohibitive.

South Eastern franchise specification

- 2.8 Along with Kent we have been engaging with DfT on the South Eastern franchise specification throughout its development. The franchise specification and Invitation to Tender (ITT) were published on 29 Nov 2017 and set out DfT's service and customer requirements for the franchise. High Speed Rail services into East Sussex are not within the core element of the franchise specification but are an option that the three potential franchisees are asked to consider and include in their submission which would increase their score.

- 2.9 ESCC, along with Hastings and Rother Councils, has met with the three shortlisted bidders (Abellio, Stagecoach and Govia) for the new franchise. We have communicated our aspirations for this part of the rail network, particularly around high speed rail, and plan to meet with the bidders now that the ITT has been released by DfT to ensure we have more detailed discussions about their proposals for the franchise.
- 2.10 The franchisees will have 90 days to submit their bids to DfT for assessment and it is expected that the franchise will commence on 9 Dec 2018.
- 2.11 As part of the South Eastern franchise, joint teams running the day to day operations across the South Eastern network will be rolled out with a new Alliance Director introduced who will be responsible for a joint team operating the trains and tracks.

Strategic Vision for Rail

- 2.12 Government published its Rail Strategy – Strategic Vision for Rail on 29 Nov 2017. The strategy builds on the recommendation of the 2011 McNulty report which identified that a greater alignment of the industry and uniting track and train was a key issue for the railway, and the 2016 Shaw report which recommended there should be a much more devolved structure, placing maintenance and upgrades in the hands of local teams who know how to best improve performance and efficiency.
- 2.13 The Strategy also sets out the plan for introducing smaller train companies to ensure that every line, station and passenger is central to each train operator’s strategy. As part of the approach, Government propose to split up the existing GTR superfranchise in 2021 which includes the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern service franchises.
- 2.14 The Strategy also commits to explore opportunities to restore capacity lost under the Beeching and British Rail cuts of the 1960s and 1970s by identifying new schemes that unlock new housing or economic growth and offer good value for money.
- 2.15 The London to South Coast Rail Corridor Study published earlier this year again considered the case for the reinstatement of the Lewes–Uckfield rail line as well as the proposals for a second Brighton mainline (BML2) – albeit neither scheme is referred to in the Strategic Vision for Rail document. The London to South Coast Rail Corridor Study concluded that there is no case for the government to take forward development of either of these schemes. However, it does acknowledge that other interested parties, including local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, may wish to progress work to improve the viability of such schemes. The study highlights that one way that this could be achieved is through local communities accepting significant additional local housing and commercial development.

3.0 A27

A27 East of Lewes – smaller scale interventions

- 3.1 Highways England’s preferred route announcement (PRA) package on the smaller scale interventions on the A27 East of Lewes, which will be funded from the £72m allocated in the Government’s Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) 2015–2020, in summary comprises:
- Improvement to the A27/A2270 signalised junction and two lanes in both directions to Cophall Roundabout as well as signalisation of the Gainsborough Lane junction;
 - Ghost island junction improvement and crossing facilities at Wilmington to improve safety;
 - Enlarged roundabout with two lane entry on both the east and westbound A27 arms at Drusillas to improve capacity;
 - Shared use path between Beddingham and Polegate – Highways England is still considering whether this should be north or south of the A27 and the PRA is non-committal on this.
- 3.2 In terms of timescales, Highways England will be carrying out further surveys and investigations in order to design the scheme in more detail over the coming months and plan to hold further public information exhibitions in 2018. Construction is expected to commence by Mar 2020 at the latest with completion of the works by Mar 2022.

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- 3.3 Whilst these smaller scale interventions are to be welcomed, they will only address the capacity, network resilience and journey time reliability issues along the A27 corridor in the short term.

- 3.4 £3m of the funding identified in the Roads Investment Strategy 2015–2020 for the A27 East of Lewes was allocated by the Secretary of State for Transport in May this year to help develop a strategic outline business case for the offline dual carriageway option which will be required to support the housing and employment growth of the area in the medium and long term.
- 3.5 Highways England, with the County Council's involvement in the specification development and tender assessment, has commissioned consultants WSP to undertake this work. WSP commenced work on the study in Nov 2017 and as part of the study a series of workshops will be held with key stakeholders including representation from the LEP and the local business community. It is expected that the final report will be completed by Spring 2018.

4.0 Newhaven Port Access Road

- 4.1 The County Council has been continuing the development work for the construction of Phase 2 of the Newhaven Port Access Road (NPAR) across the Newhaven–Seaford railway and Mill Creek to the harbour mouth.
- 4.2 Within the County Council's capital programme there is £13m allocated towards the scheme and this will be augmented with £10m in C2C LEP Local Growth Deal funding. DfT has identified the NPAR as one of their 'portfolio' schemes and therefore will retain the overall decision making responsibilities for approving the release of the Growth Deal funding.
- 4.3 We are working towards submitting the required business case to DfT in early 2018 and are seeking a letter of support from Team East Sussex (TES) as part of the submission. To inform the final business case, we need to provide a tendered contract price for the scheme. We are currently out to tender on the scheme with tender submissions due back in late Dec 2017 and a decision on the preferred contractor in Jan 2018. Subject to approval of the business case, construction will start in May 2018 with completion in late 2019.

Jon Wheeler, ESCC Strategic Economic Infrastructure, 1 Dec 2017