

East West Rail Consortium
13th March 2019

Agenda Item 6: Eastern Section

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Note the publication of the Eastern Section Prospectus**
- b) Agree to promote the Prospectus to local MPs across the East West Rail project, reflecting its strategic significance**
- c) Consider and agree the next steps, taking into consideration the opportunities set out in section 3.**

1. Context

- 1.1. The strategic ambition underpinning the East West Rail Consortium is the objective of promoting and securing a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England, including a spur to Aylesbury.
- 1.2. Whilst activities are grouped into Western, Central and Eastern Sections, the focus has always been on realising that strategic ambition.
- 1.3. Delivery of both the Western and Central Sections require the re-establishment of the rail corridor, however the opportunities associated with the Eastern Section arise largely from investment in the existing infrastructure.
- 1.4. The Consortium has always been clear: delivery of the potential for the Eastern Section is not contingent upon delivery of the Central Section – indeed delivery of the Eastern Section has always been seen as helping support the case for the Central Section creating opportunities to improve the connectivity to/from areas to the east of Cambridge with the rest of the Heartland region.
- 1.5. In this regard, the Eastern Section is, and always has been, an integral element of the overall East West Rail project. Developing the case in support of the Eastern Section was identified by the Consortium as a key priority for its 2018/19 work programme.

2. The Prospectus

- 2.1. Building on the output of work commissioned by the Consortium, the Eastern Section Working Group (chaired by Cllr Alexander Nicoll) has prepared and published a 'prospectus' which sets out the strategic case for the Eastern Section – the content of the prospectus having been considered and agreed by this Strategic Board at its meeting on 11th December 2018.
- 2.2. The purpose of this paper is to set out for the Consortium's considerations the proposed next steps in respect of the Eastern Section.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. In terms of next steps, three broad areas of activity are proposed:
 - a) *Promotion of the Eastern Section* – a press release has been issued by the Consortium publicising the prospectus, ensuring in the process the importance of the Eastern Section as an integral element of the overall East West Rail project. Further media activity is being undertaken locally by the Eastern Section Working Group in order to build knowledge of the prospectus and to develop the consensus required to support the case in support of the Eastern Section. This activity is being complemented by briefings at key meetings across the area covered by the Eastern Section.

It is proposed that the Consortium builds on this by:

- Continuing to promote and develop the narrative in support of the Eastern Section through the Consortium's social media channels
 - Seeking out opportunities to promote the importance of the Eastern Section through targeted articles in the technical and professional media
 - Briefing the All Party Parliamentary Group on the case for the Eastern Section, alongside targeted messaging of local MPs
- b) *Commissioned Technical Work* – the Consortium has a solid track record of commissioning bespoke pieces of technical work that are subsequently influential in helping make the case for investment in the East West Rail project. It also has some funds available with which to commission new technical work.

As a first step, it is proposed that the Consortium use the prospectus as the basis for an initial conversation with the Network Rail System Operator. The purpose of that conversation being to identify whether there is a need for further technical work, and/or how the ambitions set out in the prospectus might be picked up through work already programmed by the NR System Operator. This applies in respect of both future passenger and freight demand.

It is proposed that work required to support the development of the case for the Eastern Section is prioritised first when considering the use of Consortium funds for the 2019/20 work programme.

- c) *Wider Strategic Considerations* – as noted elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting, the East West Rail project, in its entirety, is a truly transformational piece of infrastructure.

In creating new travel choices and opportunities at the strategic level, East West Rail is an integral component of the Government's overarching ambition to realise the economic potential for the region. This applies in respect of both future passenger and freight demand.

It is therefore important for the Consortium to ensure that the potential for the Eastern Section, as part of the wider East West Rail project, is reflected in the development of the overarching Transport Strategies being prepared by the Sub-national Transport Bodies.

- 3.2. The Strategic Board is asked to consider the proposed areas of activity as set out in this report and agree on its approach for the year ahead in respect of making the case in support of the Eastern Section.

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