

East West Rail Consortium 13th March 2019

Agenda Item 8: West Coast Main Line Released Capacity

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Note the update on the West Coast Main Line Released Capacity study**
- b) Endorse the strategic issues identified in paragraph 2.6 that have been identified by England's Economic Heartland as needing to be considered by the study**
- c) Note that England's Economic Heartland has established a working group of representative interests, working on a 'task and finish' basis to support the EEH Business Unit**
- d) Note the update on the Old Oak Common: Future Chiltern Capacity**

1. Context

- 1.1. The East West Rail Consortium has previously identified the strategic importance of developing rail services along the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common axis.
- 1.2. The opportunity to realise this occurs through a combination of the opening of East West Rail and the opening of the first stage of HS2.
- 1.3. The Chiltern and East West Rail Route Strategy was published by Network Rail in 2017 and identified the potential and need to develop this north-south axis, partly in response to limitations elsewhere on the network and partly in response to the potential for further passenger growth as a result of planned growth set out in locally.
- 1.4. Realising the potential to develop services on this north-south axis has been a long-standing strategic priority for England's Economic Heartland and was included within the submission to the 2018 Budget.
- 1.5. Over and above the on-going work being taken forward by the East West Rail Company to deliver East West Rail, there are two pieces of work underway that are pertinent to realising the opportunity to deliver services on the north-south axis:
 - London North West South CMSP – Released Capacity WCML South
 - Old Oak Common Station: Future Chiltern Capacity

2. LNW South CMSP – Released Capacity WCML South

- 2.1. As part of the Continuous Modular Strategic Planning process (the long term planning process for the rail industry) Network Rail are taking forward work that is considering the options for the use of capacity on the West Coast Main Line following the opening of the first phase of HS2.

- 2.2. Led by the System Operator function within Network Rail, the study involves representatives from Network Rail, the DfT, the train operators and the Sub-national Transport Bodies – including England’s Economic Heartland. The expectation is that the Sub-national Transport Bodies liaise closely with local partners with an interest in the study to ensure that their needs and requirements are reflected throughout the study.
- 2.3. Key points to be aware of at this stage include:
 - The geographical area for the study is the West Coast Main Line from Euston to Handsacre Junction (just north of Tamworth) – including the Northampton ‘loop’ and the line to Coventry
 - The study provides the opportunity to completely re-think how this part of the network is used following the opening of HS2
 - Inherent within the study is the need to consider the opportunities arising from the opening of East West Rail infrastructure, and the potential of the Old Oak Common station interchange
- 2.4. The letting of the West Coast Partnership franchise – which includes the establishment of a shadow operator – is still underway, however once completed the new franchisee will become involved in study.
- 2.5. The study is in its early stages with a key focus at the present time the identification of key issues that need to be considered in more detail.
- 2.6. Building on agreed positions England’s Economic Heartland has identified the key issues that it is looking for the study to consider:
 - Reviewing the extent to which the current train service pattern supports planned growth – both that set out within Local Plans and Local Industrial Strategies: the potential identified by the National Infrastructure Commission is transformational in scale (both in terms of economic and housing growth) and, as set out in the Forum’s submission to the Williams Rail Review, there is a need to ensure that the development of the rail system is aligned to support that growth
 - Within that context reviewing how services operating along East West Rail (infrastructure) provide linkages across the wider rail network: the opportunity created by the East West Rail infrastructure is to develop – through a combination of through services and strategic interchanges – a range of travel choices that currently don’t exist in ways that offer a viable, attractive alternative to the car
 - Future requirements for freight services, within which there are two considerations:
 - Requirements for current freight services – here the consideration is much wider than the West Coast Main Line itself: the London Mayor, through his Transport Strategy, his desire to remove through freight services from the North London line. This would require paths being available on alternative routes (including potentially East West Rail and/or Felixstowe-Nuneaton) – depending on how this issue is resolved there may be implications for future use of the West Coast Main Line
 - Capacity for additional freight services – the work commissioned on Freight and Logistics is scheduled to be completed by the end of March: this will provide the Forum with an evidence base on which to begin consideration of the potential for additional freight services

- Ensuring the potential to develop services on the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common axis are realised
 - Ensuring that the strategic importance of Milton Keynes as a key interchange within the Heartland continues to be foundation of future planning for the West Coast Main Line
- 2.7. The group is invited to comment on and endorse the key issues set out above, and to identify any other strategic issues that it wishes the study to consider
- 2.8. In order to ensure that the Heartland's input into the study reflects the needs and requirements of local partners a working group of representative interests, working on a 'task and finish' basis has been established to support the EEH Business Unit. It is envisaged that the working group will operate predominately on a virtual basis.

3. Old Oak Common: Future Chiltern Capacity

- 3.1. The rail link between the Chiltern Main Line and Old Oak Common was severed at the end of 2018 as part of the advance works associated with delivering HS2.
- 3.2. The Secretary of State has publicly set out on a number of occasions his ambition to provide for a link from the new Old Oak Common station northwards into the Chilterns, restoring the link and providing the opportunity to realise the potential for services operating onwards to High Wycombe and beyond.
- 3.3. The Department for Transport is currently working on the strategic business case in support of providing the connection to/from the new Old Oak Common station.
- 3.4. The Department is keeping the EEH Business Unit and local partners briefed on this work, the timing of which is dictated by the need to take a final view on the provision that needs to be planned for at the new Old Oak Common station – a decision on which needs to be taken in the autumn.
- 3.5. Indications are that the work to date is encouraging and both the EEH Business Unit and local partners continue to work with the DfT as they develop the detail of the strategic business case.

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