

East West Main Line Partnership Strategic Board

15 March 2023

Agenda Item 5: Ely Area Capacity Enhancements

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Board:

a) Notes progress on the development of the Keeping Trade on Track brochure.

1. Context

- 1.1. The principle of modal shift for freight from road to rail is broadly supported by all three sub-national transport bodies covering the Partnership's geography. In due course Great British Railways will have a statutory duty to consider the needs of rail freight and to take those needs into account in planning the future of the rail network.
- 1.2. The Partnership is clear that the overriding investment opportunity for rail freight is through the Felixstowe-Ely-Peterborough-Midlands corridor and specifically the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement ('Ely'). This must be delivered in full at the earliest opportunity.

2. Ely brochure

- 2.1. Recent government responses to MP correspondence on Ely have raised serious concerns over whether the scheme will receive funding.
- 2.2. In response, England's Economic Heartland, working with Transport East, has produced a brochure in-house which highlights why investment at Ely is vital for the UK economy, levelling-up and net zero.
- 2.3. The brochure, Keeping Trade on Track, learns lessons from the success of the Partnership's Building Better Connections document. It highlights 10 reasons why investment in Ely is so important and includes quotes from industry, ports, MPs and councillors.
- 2.4. The brochure highlights how unlocking additional freight capacity will benefit the Midlands, North and East, reduce congestion (removing 100,000 lorry journeys per year), support Freeport East and unlock better passenger services between Ipswich and Peterborough; and King's Cross and King's Lynn.
- 2.5. The section on improved passenger services also includes the following quote from the Chair of the Eastern Section: "The upgrade of Ely and Haughley junctions are essential if we are to deliver a true East West Main Line running from the Suffolk coast all the way to Bristol and south Wales. Challenging the historic north-south rail dominance while connecting growing places, igniting innovation and accelerating progress to a net-zero economy."
- 2.6. The draft brochure will be shared with stakeholders prior to the spring budget before an official launch in early summer.

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