

## **East West Main Line Partnership Strategic Board**

**14 June 2023**

### **Agenda Item: Work programme and subscriptions**

**Recommendation: It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Notes a small number of outstanding member contributions for 2022/23**
- b) Agrees to freeze subscription fees for 2023/24**
- c) Agrees priorities for the Partnership's work programme for 2023/24**

#### **1. Context**

- 1.1. The East West Rail Consortium/ Main Line Partnership has been making the case for delivery of a railway connecting East Anglia, with central, southern and western England for over 25 years, including making the original business case for East West Rail.
- 1.2. In 2016, government established East West Rail Company to deliver and operate the railway from Oxford to Cambridge.
- 1.3. The section of East West Rail between Oxford and Bletchley is currently under construction and expected to be operational by 2025. East West Rail Company is also responsible for designing and delivering the next stage of the project to Cambridge.
- 1.4. The East West Main Line Partnership is solely reliant on funding from local contributions of its members. The level of subscription is agreed each year by Board members.
- 1.5. Buckinghamshire Council is the accountable body for the Partnership. The England's Economic Heartland business unit (also located within Buckinghamshire Council) is responsible for the day-to-day administration, officer staffing and secretariat functions of the Partnership.

#### **2. 2022/2023 - review**

- 2.1. The financial year 2022/23 saw this partnership play a crucial role in making the case for East West Rail's next sections between Bletchley, Bedford and Cambridge.
- 2.2. The brochure, Building Better Connections, which contained interviews with leading business representatives and infographics showcasing the opportunities East West Rail unlocks for the science and technology sector, was produced by the partnership and launched at an East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group event in October 2022.
- 2.3. The brochure and associated event and communications has been credited with playing an important role in securing the Chancellor's recommitment to East West Rail in November 2022. The partnership's launch event, in October 2022, was one of the most successful events hosted by the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group in terms of attendance.
- 2.4. During the last financial year, the Partnership also agreed to jointly fund work on progressing the Aylesbury link to Milton Keynes. This work has carried over to this financial year. As per the next agenda item, an economic consultancy has been identified to carry out this work, which we expect to commence shortly.

- 2.5. Through 2022/23, the Partnership continued (through the regular Eastern Section Board) to advocate for progress on the Eastern Section to Norfolk and Suffolk. Transport East oversees the Eastern Section Board.
- 2.6. It is also worth noting that during the last financial year the Partnership gained a new member, Cambridge City Council.
- 2.7. Partnership Board meetings give members the opportunity to speak directly with senior representatives from East West Rail Company and East West Rail Alliance – updates from both are standing items on the Partnership’s agenda.
- 2.8. As well as this, the Partnership plays an important role in identifying synergies and areas of collaboration for partners, this has included to date: lessons learnt from construction phases, maximising the potential for an East West Main Line and exploring first last mile connectivity solutions from future East West Rail stations.
- 2.9. It should also be noted that the Partnership also plays a vital role managing and recording the ‘work in kind’ contributions which a number of local authorities are making towards realising the scheme, as agreed with government as a condition of the scheme originally being taken forward back in 2012.
- 2.10. In the financial year 2022/23, £37,803 was received in subscriptions from local authority members – this is £11,637 short of the expected income of £49,440 as contributions from six members has not been received (equivalent to almost a quarter of expected income).

### 3. 2022/23 expenditure

- 3.1. The East West Main Line Partnership spent £73,274 of an allocated £127,620 during 2022/23. The difference is mainly due to work expected to be commissioned on the Aylesbury link and Eastern Section, which is now being commissioned.

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
Staffing inc WiK management, secretariat and communications support	£30,000	£30,000	This is to pay for EEH secretariat including policy and communications, project management, budget control and work in kind record keeping.
Website, Marketing and Graphics Materials	£3,120	£3,049	Covering website hosting/ maintenance and design and graphic materials.
Making the case for East West Rail	£37,000	£37,000	Work to demonstrate the imperative for East West Rail, including the business advocacy brochure.
Sponsorship of EWR APPG session	£5,000	£3,225	Expenses incurred to launch the business advocacy brochure at the East of England APPG event in Parliament, where ministerial presence was secured.
Aylesbury Link	£30,000	-	Joint work with Buckinghamshire Council is likely to be commissioned in the coming weeks.

Progressing Eastern Section	£12,500	-	Monies previously set aside for Transport East to fund the study of wider economic impacts of the Eastern Section.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£117,620</b>	<b>£73,274</b>	

#### 4. 2023/24: income and key contributions

- 4.1. As of 1 March 2023 the Partnership's balance stood at £86,552.
- 4.2. This includes £46,552 not spent during 2022/23 plus essential reserves of £40,000.
- 4.3. If the Aylesbury Link and Progressing Eastern Section monies are considered to be ringfenced (having previously been agreed by Board), the Partnership starts 2023/24 with £4,052 (i.e. not including reserves and forthcoming subscription monies).
- 4.4. In recognition of ongoing financial pressures facing local authorities, it is proposed that subscription levels from 2022/23 are frozen: £1,545 for district authorities and £3,090 for unitary and county authorities.
- 4.5. Assuming subscriptions are secured from all member authorities during the 2023/24 financial year, this will generate £49,440 of income.
- 4.6. Prior to setting the work programme for 2023/24, the Partnership is asked to agree continuation of two key principles of the EWMLP contributions:
  - That £30,600 is paid to EEH to contribute towards its costs of being the Partnership secretariat. This is an increase of 2% on last year, contributing a small additional amount to inflationary staff costs.
  - £3,120 is budgeted for website and graphics costs, this remains a fixed amount, comparable with the previous year.
- 4.7. Following these contributions, and assuming the full income from the Partnership is received, leaves £19,772 for any activity (alongside £42,500 for ringfenced project, funded from previous years – Aylesbury Link and Eastern Section).
- 4.8. If outstanding fees can be recovered from 2022/23 and all subscriptions secured for 2023/24 the work programme budget for new projects could be up to £31,410.

#### 5. 2023/24 work programme

- 5.1. The over-riding priority for the Partnership during 2022/23 was ensuring government's commitment to delivering the scheme from Bletchley through to Cambridge.
- 5.2. Having secured the commitment, the focus at a strategic level now turns to maximising the opportunity from investment in East West Rail.
- 5.3. On Friday June 9 England's Economic Heartland's Strategic Transport Leadership Board discussed how, working with partners including East West Main Line Partnership, government's commitment to East West Rail is focused on leaving a lasting and positive legacy for communities and businesses across the region.
- 5.4. Taking into account the Partnership's level of funding, it is suggested that it can contribute most to maximising East West Rail's legacy in the year ahead by focussing on three key areas:
  - *Using investment in the Oxford-Cambridge section as the catalyst for the East West Main Line:* Progressing the case for a coast-to-coast main line to Norfolk and Suffolk (led by Eastern Section Board/ Transport East, contributing the £12,500 ringfenced money as appropriate); and Swindon, Bristol and South Wales (in collaboration with Western Gateway STB and England's Economic Heartland); and continuing to highlight opportunities for integration with nearby stations (for example, Northampton, Stevenage, Wellingborough, Luton, Stansted, Peterborough).

- *Doing things well, doing things right:* The Partnership Board includes senior representation from the East West Railway Company and East West Rail Alliance. This gives Board members a crucial role representing the views of communities where the scheme is currently being built and ensuring everything is being done to mitigate construction and operational impacts both now and applying lessons learnt for future construction and operation.
- *Ensuring the Aylesbury link is progressed:* The Aylesbury link to Milton Keynes is an original and integral part of the East West Rail scheme. During 2023/24 the Partnership will work with Buckinghamshire Council on building the economic narrative for the link to be built as soon as possible (see next agenda item). Up to £30,000 of spend has been ringfenced for this project.

5.5. Board views are welcomed on these key work areas.

**Naomi Green**

**(on behalf of) East West Main Line Partnership Secretariat**

**March 2023**