

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

**12 January 2024**

### **Agenda Item 5: Benefits realisation of transformational infrastructure**

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

- a) Hears the presentation from local representative, Cllr Jardine, on the success of Borders Railway.**
- b) Agrees to further work to understand how benefits have been realised for other recently-delivered schemes**

#### **1. Context**

- 1.1. The previous agenda item on the National Audit Office's report highlighted the issues associated with adequately capturing the benefits of transformational schemes such as East West Rail.
- 1.2. It is an issue which the EWMLP and England's Economic Heartland have highlighted over many years, including through our work in 2022 on Building Better Connections, and with the campaign to secure funding for the Ely Junction capacity improvements. At a national level, the Transport Select Committee is also considering the wider strategic benefits of infrastructure through its 'strategic objectives' inquiry.
- 1.3. A powerful way of illustrating the transformational potential of future projects is through considering the impact of similar schemes delivered in recent years.
- 1.4. One such project is Borders Railway. EWMLP has therefore invited a representative to speak to the Board about how the railway has exceeded expectations and any lessons learnt from its operation.

#### **2. Borders Railway**

- 2.1. The Borders Railway was opened in 2015 and connects Edinburgh with Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders, serving nine stations along its route.
- 2.2. At 35 miles in length, the Borders Railway is a similar length to East West Rail's proposed new section of railway linking Bedford and Cambridge which is 38 miles. The former Varsity line and the Borders Railway (which was then known as the Waverley line) were both closed in the 1960s.
- 2.3. The railway has seen passenger numbers far exceed those originally forecast. Such high demand led to Scotrail introducing more carriages and a more frequent service.
- 2.4. It has been so successful that a feasibility study has now been commissioned to look at extending the line from its current terminus.
- 2.5. Council and business leaders in the Scottish Borders have highlighted the many benefits that the railway has brought to the area such as an increase in footfall in town centres, more business investment in the region and better work and leisure opportunities for local people.
- 2.6. The Borders Railway has also provided a boom for the tourism industry within the Borders region.

**3. Next steps**

- 3.1. Subject to the views of the Board, it is proposed that the EWMLP, with support from the East West Railway Company, produces a detailed case study on the success of Borders Railway which can be shared with media and other stakeholders.
- 3.2. It is also proposed that further 'benefits-realisation analysis' is undertaken by the EWMLP and EWR Company examining several other relevant schemes, for example, the impact of Corby station re-opening, Crossrail and the Evergreen 3 project between Oxford, Bicester and London.
- 3.3. The work would further support the case for delivery of East West Rail in full, while giving Board members the opportunity to learn lessons from similar schemes both nationally, and potentially, internationally. The work would also provide the wider context for other major schemes being promoted across the region. The work is intended to be limited in cost beyond staff time.

**Adam King**  
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