

HS2 Task and Finish Group

11 March 2014 – 4.00pm

Present: Cllr Cliff Moreton (Chair)
Cllr Dave Bishop
Cllr Paul Marks
Cllr Margaret Talbot
Cllr Mike Tebbutt

Also Present: Martin Hammond
Val Hitchman
David Pope

External Evidence Providers:

Representatives from three external organisations attended the meeting to provide information and answer predetermined questions from members. In attendance were Chris Wragg, Transport Planning Team Leader for Northamptonshire County Council; Hilary Chipping, the Head of Infrastructure for South East Midlands Enterprise Partnership and Jo Lappin, the Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Simon Richardson.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting held on 25th February 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair; subject to the amendment of Cllr Margaret Talbot as proposer of Cllr Cliff Moreton as chair.

3. **Evidence**

The Chair outlined the key areas of concern put forward for consideration at the previous meeting of the task and finish group, these are listed below:-

- No reduction in train service levels or frequency of services in the borough as a result of HS2

Item A1 – Appendix A (ii)

- Train fares and railcards for customers in the borough
- Implications for freight transported by rail through the borough
- Line speed enhancement and electrification

Northamptonshire County Council

Chris Wragg stated that NCC was supportive of HS2 due to the potential benefits it could bring to the county, particularly relief capacity at the southern end of the West Coast Mainline. However, NCC did have a number of concerns about certain aspects of HS2 and was seeking approval of a recommendation through their Cabinet and Full Council to petition parliament regarding amendments to the HS2 Bill.

The concerns are listed below:-

- Stopping up of highways affected by the route.
- HGV movements on unsuitable, single track roads
- Environmental impacts, including noise
- The need for a less intrusive route through Northamptonshire
- Serious concerns regarding the proposed reduction of platforms at Euston Station from 18 to 13 by 2016
- Inaccuracies in HS2 baseline patronage figures

Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP)

Jo Lappin advised the meeting that NEP's views on HS2 were still being formed, as the information required to make a serious economic assessment was yet to be made available. NEP wished to undertake further work on economic impacts in consultation with all partner organisations including NCC, district and borough authorities and SEMLEP. NEP's aim was to sell Northamptonshire as an alternative to London when it came to investment, as an area with growing population and workforce as well as centrally located. It was important that links were made between growth areas for investment and the skills required to deliver that growth.

South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership

Hilary Chipping advised the group that SEMLEP would also work closely with NEP on issues such as housing, transport and economy. There were a number of issues facing areas outside of Northamptonshire that fell under SEMLEP's remit, and it would work to provide the best outcome for the whole area, particularly with regard to issues such as freeing up of capacity, better train services for Milton Keynes and Northampton and beyond.

Conclusions

Following discussions, the group decided on key points to take forward. These are summarised as follows:-

- Patronage from Kettering to London had grown hugely and was anticipated to increase further, especially when taking into account the growth agenda. The frequency of train services to London could also be reasonably expected to increase.
- Connectivity northwards was very important, although it may prove more difficult to secure. Additional lobbying by a delegation of local authority leaders could ensure the issue appeared on the agenda for decision makers. A service to the East Midlands Hub at Toton, and connection to HS2 would provide much faster access to cities such as Leeds or Newcastle. Northamptonshire was poorly served with regard to core city connections, other than London or Birmingham.
- Electrification of Midland Mainline would be vital, ensuring resilience against potential HS2 threats. However, although electrification would take place as far as Kettering and Corby, there was no guarantee of finance for the next phase through to Sheffield. Lobbying would be required, with involvement of all authorities along the Midland Mainline, to ensure the case for continued electrification of the line remained at the forefront.
- The proposed East-West rail route from Oxford through to Bedford via Bletchley would be of great benefit if completed. It was envisaged that this line could eventually connect with the eastern ports of Harwich and Felixstowe. If freight were to utilise this line it would alleviate congestion on the A14.

4. Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting date would be 25th March 2014, commencing at 4pm.

The group were advised that David Horne of East Midlands Trains and Andrew Pritchard of East Midlands Councils would be in attendance. The group also decided to extend an invitation to Christopher Groome, Chairman of LANRAC.

(The meeting started at 4:00pm and ended at 5.50pm)

Signed:.....

Chair