

HS2 Task and Finish Group

25th March 2014 – 4.00pm

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

Also Present: Martin Hammond
Val Hitchman
Simon Richardson
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 David Horne, Chairman of East Midlands Trains; Simon Taylor, Head of Network Development East Midlands Trains; Andrew Pritchard, Director of Policy & Infrastructure for East Midlands Councils and Christopher Groome, Chairman of LANRAC.

1. **Apologies**

None

2. **Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting held on 11th March 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

3. **Evidence**

Leicestershire and Northampton Rail Action Committee (LANRAC)

Christopher Groome attended the meeting and noted that for stations to the south of Leicester, the main High Speed Two (HS2) connection

point would be at Toton. However, trains departing from Kettering, Wellingborough and Market Harborough travelled to Nottingham, thereby missing the connection point at Toton. For HS2 to be of benefit to Kettering, a connection from Midland Mainline (MML) to Toton was imperative.

A current lack of services from Kettering to Derby, and only one train per hour to Nottingham was a concern, especially given rumours of services post-HS2 being reduced below current service levels. Kettering had, in the past, had a very good service with a half hourly service to Derby and Nottingham, but these services had been cut as a result of the speeding-up of services northward. Cllr Groome stated that the wider sub region was one with great potential for growth and that there needed to be proper provision for taking advantage of HS2 as it may provide Kettering with an advantage over other areas competing for investment.

Members enquired whether it would be possible to use Toton as a nodal point for trains straight down MML to St Pancras in order to provide a more direct route to Europe. Councillor Groome replied that there was a proposal under current plans for a link between the Euston HS2 terminus and Kings Cross-St Pancras that would be named Euston Cross. However, if cost cutting became an issue, this link between HS1 and HS2 may come under threat. This would not adversely affect Kettering due to satisfactory existing links with HS1.

East Midlands Trains

David Horne, Chairman of East Midlands Trains, attended the meeting and advised the group that 19 locations had been considered for the HS2 connection point, with Toton being the final choice. Considerations included which site offered the best connectivity, catchment area and economic viability. It was noted that HS2 was not being constructed specifically with 2040 in mind, instead looking far into the future. Once transport infrastructure had been provided, development around Toton station would follow and land use policies would alter accordingly. It was further noted that it would be comparatively easy to construct the line through Toton rather than through Derby or Nottingham as far less tunneling would be required, reducing both costs and build time. Additionally, Toton had plenty of available land in the vicinity.

Mr Horne was asked whether services from Kettering could be routed through Toton without too much difficulty. He replied that there was potential for this approach. It was anticipated that HS2 would free up

Item A1 – Appendix A (iii)

considerably capacity on MML which would enable East Midlands Trains to concentrate on connectivity between towns and cities on the line.

The Task and Finish Group were advised that since 1995, passenger numbers on the MML had more than doubled from 6 million to 14 million a year, with growth set to continue strongly. As a result of these increases, MML had reached maximum capacity.

Over the next five years there would be substantial investment in the existing network, adding track between Bedford, Kettering and Corby, with additional trains and platform lengthening to accommodate longer trains. In the longer term, HS2 was critical in providing extra capacity on the network to cope with the ongoing growth of passenger numbers. Without HS2, there would be a real struggle to provide the necessary capacity for passengers travelling to London in 30 years time.

HS2 was anticipated to absorb a large portion of the long distance city-to-city traffic currently carried on MML. A study had indicated that 75-90% of people undertaking long distance journeys on MML, eg. from Sheffield, would be likely to switch to HS2, so East Midlands Trains could concentrate more on serving the needs of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire rather than balancing these needs with those of passengers in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire. The meeting heard that it was this existing compromise which affected current connectivity at Kettering. Should long distance journeys switch from MML to HS2, it was estimated that 35% passenger usage would be removed from MML.

Kettering, as a busier station than either Wellingborough or Market Harborough; would be well positioned when train operators considered services alterations following the advent of HS2. There was a strong case for running at least same number of services as passenger numbers were already present and would only increase. Although Network Rail had produced a report suggesting a reduction in services, it had not taken account of growth or developments in specific areas. Any increase in the frequency of trains to Corby in the future would need to take account of the impact on services north from Kettering.

Regarding fares on the new HS2 system, it was anticipated that these would cost the same as fares on existing routes and the rail industry would be proposing this to the government. The whole ticketing system was seen as archaic, and the pricing structure sub-optimal. HS2 would hopefully be a catalyst for change across the rail network as a driver of innovation. It was also noted that some pricing structures were at

present governed by capacity.

David Horne advised the group that two further lines relevant to discussion were not currently planned for electrification. The first, beyond Corby via Manton Junction to Melton, if electrified, would open up opportunities for further services and provide a diversion alternative during busy periods. The other line ran through Toton and Mr Horne noted that regional lobbying to have this line electrified was imperative so that MML could run services to Toton.

Members considered that electrification of MML northwards would provide a kick-start to the development of Kettering's Station Quarter, which was still active as part of Planning Policy. A resulting decrease in journey times could also see additional investment into the area. Kettering Energy Park would make the town energy self-sufficient within 10-15 years and this would have positive tax implications for any inward investment.

David Horne also presented the meeting with figures for passenger volumes on MML and statistics detailing the top ten destinations for passengers travelling from Kettering and the top ten journey start points for passengers purchasing tickets terminating at Kettering.

East Midlands Councils

Andrew Pritchard advised the meeting that East Midlands Councils were trying to pull together a coherent lobbying message for the East Midlands. This was a case of establishing what councils wished to achieve and what would make HS2 work for the region. A Programme Board arrangement was being formed to provide astute political leadership and focus to articulate East Midlands' requirements to ministers in the same manner that large cities such as Manchester had been able to do so far. It was considered that the East Midlands was exactly the sort of area the government should be investing in, with increasing employment and housing, and this information had to be conveyed in a compelling manner to decision makers.

EMC had undertaken a piece of technical work that demonstrated connectivity to HS2 was eminently achievable, with the cheapest option being at Toton itself. As far as EMC was concerned connectivity was the single biggest issue, with the issue of relief capacity also providing the option to meet travel demand south of Leicester. The group were informed that their involvement in providing a coherent regional vision could play a key role in shaping future service patterns to the benefit of the whole East Midlands region.

It was noted as being important that all Local Enterprise Partnerships with a stake in HS2 understood each others views and identified common issues and challenges. An East Midlands All Parliamentary Group meeting was scheduled for 7th April, where conversation would be initiated with MP's for the region to interest them in the agenda. The group were advised that any achievements would arise from an iterative process with ongoing dialogue at all levels. Any additional lobbying that KBC could provide would be extremely useful.

4. Conclusions

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

- Continued electrification of the line going North;
- Midland Mainline having a connection to HS2 at Toton;
- Alignment of the aims of Local Enterprise Partnerships along the route towards achieving a common goal;
- Assurances that East Midlands Trains would receive the best and most appropriate rolling stock

5. Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting date would be 1 April 2014, commencing at 4pm.

The group were advised that this session would be used to present, and receive comments on, the draft report to be taken forward to the meeting of the Research and Development Committee to be held on 22nd April 2014.

(The meeting started at 4:00pm and ended at 5.20pm)

Signed:.....

Chair