

CABINET
19 OCTOBER 2017**WORCESTERSHIRE RAIL INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Dr K A Pollock

Relevant Officer

Director of Economy and Infrastructure

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure recommends that Cabinet formally endorses and adopts the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy.

Introduction

2. In 2016 Worcestershire County Council commissioned the development of a Rail Investment Strategy for Worcestershire (WRIS). The document is intended to set the economic context for rail investment, inform the development of LTP4 and underpin the future pipeline of projects over the current and emerging plan period.
3. Investing in the rail infrastructure is an important element of supporting sustained economic growth, investment that will increase capacity, connectivity and transport choice across Worcestershire and beyond. The outputs of the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy (WRIS) provide clarity of intent and clear priorities for discussions with the increasingly complex rail industry.
4. The Strategy is split into 5 key stages, designed to baseline the current rail situation in the County, assess the scale of growth expected, identify gaps and solutions, model the economic benefits of these solutions and prioritise the investment to achieve maximum value for money.
5. A six week consultation was carried out over the summer following endorsement by the Cabinet Member responsible for Economy and Infrastructure. All written submissions received were duly considered during August 2017, and the Council response to these submissions is available to see in the Consultation Report at Appendix 2. The outcomes of the consultation shaped revisions to the draft of the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy which is attached as Appendix 1.

Background

6. Worcestershire is an attractive, thriving County of 566,000 people, set to grow by 47,200 new homes by 2030 and 25,000 new jobs by 2025 which will result in a £2.9bn growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) from £9bn to £11.9bn per annum. The County's rail

services will not match these ambitions without significant development and investment beyond that proposed by the rail industry. The key driver of change include:

7. Connectivity to London is slow and of limited frequency, with many Worcestershire passengers using the M5-M42-M40 to access better Birmingham International and Warwick Parkway services. The opening of Worcestershire Parkway in early 2019 will, however, begin to address this issue by providing enhanced accessibility to the North Cotswold Line services.

8. The growing University City of Worcester suffers poor connectivity due to restricted rail infrastructure, outdated signalling and limited historic investment in its 2 stations.

9. Kidderminster and Redditch (and Bromsgrove after introduction of the new electrification timetable in May 2018) are well served by local services into Birmingham, but have limited connectivity to London or southwards.

10. The industry forecasts up to 97% growth in passenger volumes on Worcestershire routes by 2043.

11. In response the rail industry has an emerging vision, shared in Worcestershire, for a faster 2 trains per hour Worcestershire to London service, supported by enhancements to the North Cotswold Line, the (scaled back) Great Western electrification scheme and new Intercity Express Project (IEP) trains.

12. However its planning processes do not include additional Cross Country or southbound connectivity beyond current commitments to serve the new Worcestershire Parkway in 2019. Thus demonstrating a lack of strategic thinking regarding the entire network (as 'one railway') and the resultant implications on the entire regional economy ('one economy').

13. Addressing capacity restrictions caused by the County's several single line sections and outdated signalling systems is being considered by Network Rail but with no firm timescales.

14. Electrification of the Bristol-Birmingham and Snow Hill Lines, capable of increasing capacity for new services for Worcestershire, was under DfT consideration. However, significant delays and cost increases incurred as part of recent proposals to electrify the Great Western Mainline have resulted in a cessation of future electrification schemes.

Strategic Response

15. The Strategy proposes four overarching Conditional Outputs for rail service development which would deliver £50.42m GVA per annum, and 1,100 new jobs in the County:

- 1) 2 Trains Per Hour Worcester-Oxford-Paddington – £21.22m GVA p.a. and 475 new jobs;
- 2) 1 Train Per Hour Kidderminster-Droitwich Spa-Worcester-Paddington – £13.8m GVA p.a. and 275 new jobs
- 3) Calls At Worcestershire Parkway In Bristol-Manchester And Plymouth-Newcastle Services – £9.6m GVA p.a. and 250 new jobs

- 4) Regional Service between Kidderminster/ Bromsgrove, Worcester and Cheltenham Spa, Gloucester And Bristol – £5.73m GVA p.a. and 150 new jobs.

16. The infrastructure schemes essential to facilitate this new connectivity have been identified as:

- 1) North Cotswold Line capacity upgrade
- 2) Worcester Area and Droitwich Spa to Stoke Works capacity upgrade
- 3) New Car Park Capacity and/or new stations
- 4) Worcester Shrub Hill Station regeneration.

17. The draft WRIS underwent a public consultation which finished on 11 August 2017. The Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 2 of this report. The key headlines from the consultation exercise are as follows:

- Overall 81 respondents completed the questionnaire;
- 84% of respondents either strongly supported or supported the strategy;
- Only 8% opposed or strongly opposed the strategy. Reasons include:
 - Disagree with Operators cutting services;
 - Unhappy that the WRIS does not support the reinstatement of the Stratford-Honeybourne line;
 - Lack of investment in Wythall station;
 - Plays down the role of Shrub Hill.
- 44 detailed responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders including Network Rail, Rail West Midlands, London Midland and GWR.
- Nine written responses were received from members of the public.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

18. There are no Legal or HR implications. Individual projects identified in the RIS will require specific funding and respective budget approval from funding partners including Network Rail and the Department for Transport. Preliminary work on key projects has begun within existing budgets, and further papers will follow as priorities of potential funding streams become clear.

Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments

19. No impacts have been identified.

Equality and Diversity Implications

20. No direct impacts identified.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Consultation Report

The appendices are available on-line at www.worcestershire.gov.uk

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Economy and Infrastructure) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.