



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

JAMES PALMER
CAMBRIDGESHIRE &
PETERBOROUGH MAYOR

Agenda Item No: 2.7

Wisbech Rail

To:	Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Meeting Date:	10 March 2021
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor James Palmer
From:	Paul Raynes Director of Delivery and Strategy
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Recommendations:	<p>The Transport and Infrastructure Committee is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Note the content of this report; and,b) Authorise the conclusion of a Network Rail standard Basic Services Agreement on terms approved by the Chief Legal Officer/Monitoring Officer; andc) Recommend the drawdown of £300,000 capital funding from the Medium-Term Financial Plan to enable the next steps to progress and spent in 2021/22.
Voting arrangements:	<p>For items (a), and (b) a simple majority of all Members</p> <p>For item (c) a vote in favour by at least two thirds of all Members (or their Substitute Members) appointed by the Constituent Councils, to include the Members appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council, or their Substitute Members</p>

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the progress of the Wisbech Rail project and to outline the next steps.

2. Background

- 2.1 Wisbech is widely recognised as the one of the largest towns within England without a rail link to the main rail network. Improving connectivity to Cambridge offers the opportunity to transform Wisbech as a place for inward investment and provide much enhanced accessibility to key services and employment opportunities for its residents.
- 2.2 The draft GRIP 3b study for the Wisbech Rail project was considered by the Combined Authority Board on 3 June 2020 and was later approved on 8 July 2020 by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee. The Board and Committee agreed to continued engagement with the Department for Transport (DfT) and other central government departments to explore next steps for the project.

3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 Successful engagement with DfT, Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and Network Rail about the Business Case and GRIP 3b study for Wisbech Rail has identified opportunities where greater flexibility about national constraints could save infrastructure costs. Notably, by reviewing the level crossing strategy to include barrier crossings and to consider the re-use of material from other Network Rail projects.
- 3.2 Discussions also explored how best to ensure the link between Wisbech Rail and the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements which is needed to achieve a 2 trains per hour direct services to Cambridge.
- 3.3 The Mayor has met Chris Heaton-Harris, Minister of State for Transport, on two occasions to highlight the importance of both Wisbech Rail and Ely Area Capacity Enhancements for the County.
- 3.4 The Minister subsequently confirmed that the Wisbech Rail project would be considered for funding alongside the outputs from the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements Outline Business Case as that is completed.
- 3.5 To prepare for that decision point, the Combined Authority, which has hitherto pursued this project itself, has secured Network Rail's agreement to deliver the next phase of business case development in partnership. This work will look to align Wisbech Rail with the delivery sequence of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements. This new integrated approach will see the development of the Wisbech Rail business case and GRIP 3b in line with Network Rail's Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP). This is in keeping with Network Rail's new project management approach. This renewed work will also involve refining the existing work delivered by the Combined Authority, as well as assessing options for the Wisbech to March line, and developing significant cost savings.

- 3.6 Furthermore, to bring Wisbech Rail into greater alignment with Ely Area Capacity Enhancements, the renewed work will also consider further the development of an initial service between Wisbech and March - as already envisaged in the business case - with a view that direct services could operate to Cambridge following improvements in network capacity at Ely North Junction.
- 3.7 Initial work to review all documentation, options assessment and provide a programme and cost estimate for the next stage of work is expected to take 7 months with a budget estimate of £300,000 with a view to report the outcome of this work at the November 2021 Transport and Infrastructure Committee and Combined Authority Board.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Budget estimate for Network Rail to review all documentation, options assessment and provide a programme and cost estimate for the next stage of work is £300,000.
- 4.2 Recommend the drawdown of £300,000 capital funding from the Medium-Term Financial Plan to be spent in 2021/22 to enable this work to progress.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Combined Authority will enter into a Network Rail standard Basic Services Agreement after confirmation as fit for purpose by the Combined Authority's Legal Services.
- 5.2 The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Part 3 and 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/251).
- 5.3 The meeting shall be conducted in accordance with Parts 2 and 3 of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

6. Other Significant Implications

- 6.1 None at this time

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – 8 July [Transport and Infrastructure Paper](#)

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 [Wisbech Rail Full Business Case](#)
- 8.2 [Wisbech Rail GRIP 3b](#)