

**STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE**

**LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

**EXECUTIVE GROUP MEETING**

**Rail Update**

**Not Confidential**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report is to provide the LEP Executive Group with an update on Rail Matters within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Currently rail is experiencing a renaissance and the involvement of both the City and County Council's in rail is driving many positive outcomes. Over the last ten years patronage has grown by 84% which is well in excess of the national growth of 53%.
- 1.2 Both the City Council and the County Council are active members of West Midlands Rail Ltd and Rail North Ltd. These companies are owned by the partner authorities and created with the purpose of specifying, and managing rail franchising.
- 1.3 The LEP and both the City and County Councils are all active members of Midlands Connect which is helping to develop the priorities for future strategic investment. Work undertaken by Midlands Connect has also been used to develop the recently published Network Rail West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study. This includes as one of its priorities the Midlands Rail Hub which will provide extra capacity in the West Midlands, possibly enabling new local rail services between Birmingham, Stafford and Stoke and Birmingham, Tamworth, Burton and Derby.
- 1.4 The LEP, Chamber of Commerce, the City Council and the County Council are partners along with East Midlands Trains in the Crewe-Stoke-Derby Stakeholder Board. The Board has developed and published a report outlining the required outcomes for the line in the short, medium and long-term. Clare Horton on behalf of the County Council is vice chair of this Board.
- 1.5 There are many consultations which the LEP and both the City and County Councils are preparing responses to. These include the High Level Output Statement (HLOS) which informs Network Rail's Business Plan for the next funding period, the East Midlands Franchise Consultation, the HS2 Crewe Hub Consultation and the HS2 Phase 2a consultation. Further consultations are also expected within the next six months. These include

the West Coast Partnership and the Cross Country Franchise consultations.

- 1.6 In terms of freight the West Midlands Interchange Stage Two Consultation has recently closed. Determination of Planning Permission will be considered by the Planning Inspectorate as it is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. Item 11 considers this.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The LEP to continue to be an active member of Midlands Connect
- 2.2 The LEP to continue to be an active partner of the Crewe-Stoke-Derby Stakeholder Board.
- 2.3 The LEP to champion the ambitions of the Crewe-Stoke-Derby Stakeholder Board.
- 2.4 The LEP through Midlands Connect to lobby for rail investment in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent including new train path opportunities as a result of the Midlands Rail Hub to the benefit of the LEP area.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Network Rail owns the rail infrastructure and manages the rail network. They are also responsible for maintaining the asset. All rail services are operated under franchises by train operating companies. Rolling Stock Operating Companies own the rolling stock and lease it to the train operators.
- 3.2 Franchises also generally include the management and operation of stations through a station lease to station facility operators. The two largest stations within the LEP area are Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford with 2.8 and 2.2 million passengers in 2015/16 respectively. These are managed by Virgin West Coast. However, there are a few exceptions to this model and these are major interchanges e.g. Birmingham New Street which remain under the management of Network Rail.
- 3.3 Franchises are let by Department for Transport. However, recent Government Policy has enabled the devolution of rail services for example through Rail North Ltd and West Midlands Rail Ltd (WMR). Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council are active members of both of the company's established for this purpose with directors and officers on the various boards. Cllr Mark Winnington of Staffordshire County Council is currently Vice Chair of WMR's Board of Directors and Clare Horton, an officer of Staffordshire County Council is Chair of WMR's Officer Rail Devolution Group. This has enabled a positive and strong local influence on the franchise specification which otherwise would not have happened.

3.4 The **West Midlands Franchise** has recently been announced with the winning bidder West Midland Trains. The County Council was heavily involved through WMR (as a restricted person with Government) in the specification of the franchise. Both Authorities also undertook independent commercially confidential discussions with bidders which helped to shape their bids. Improvements for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent through the Authority's involvement in the franchise procurement process has Included:

- Better Sunday Services
- A service quality regime at stations and on trains
- Later and earlier services
- Increased capacity into Birmingham
- A new service from Crewe to Birmingham and Birmingham International via Kidsgrove, Stoke and Stone
- A London service for Kidsgrove, Stoke and Stone via Birmingham
- A connection at Stafford for passengers wishing to use the Crewe-London via Trent Valley service
- New station car-park at Stone Station and extra car-park spaces at Tamworth Station
- New rolling stock
- New locally developed branding owned by WMR
- Compensation for delays of more than 15 minutes.
- Improved passenger information
- Smart ticketing
- Investment in community rail
- Increased frequency of services on the Shrewsbury Line and Chase Line
- More trains between Four Oaks and Lichfield
- Half-hourly services at Penkridge in both directions
- Local West Midlands business unit with a locally appointed WMR Contract Manager
- Station Alliance with WMR and Network Rail

3.5 **East Midlands Trains** is currently the operator of the East Midlands Franchise until August 2019. Both Authorities have a very close working relationship with the current operator. This includes through the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership which both local Authority's part fund in collaboration with the train operator. Passenger Satisfaction along the route has increased tremendously together with increases in footfall of 145% between 2006/07 and 2015/16. All stations along the CRP route have enjoyed investment during the partnership term. This has included:

- Improved Customer Information Screens
- CCTV
- New waiting shelters

- Cycle parking
  - Car-park improvements
  - Aesthetic improvements e.g. planting and art work.
- 3.6 The County Council is currently working with Network Rail and East Midlands Trains on the regeneration of Kidsgrove Rail Station which will include a new accessible bridge to all platforms, a new 200 space car-park, a multi-modal interchange, improved walking and cycling routes and improved access to the canal. Local match funding for this Project is being provided by the LEP and also the County Council. Other live projects include locally funded improvements to Burton-upon-Trent Station forecourt and the establishment of a multi-agency steering group with the Station Facility Operator to develop a station masterplan for Burton.
- 3.7 The Stakeholder Board as outlined in 1.4 is currently developing an agreed response to the East Midlands Franchise consultation and also the ORR's<sup>1</sup> HLOS consultation. Both Authorities are also developing their responses to this consultation in conjunction with each other and they will both be meeting with DfT's franchise team to discuss and shape the development of the Invitation to Tender due to be published in April 2018. Both Authorities have been having early conversations with the bidders for this Franchise in order to influence their thinking and development of their bids. This will continue and it is expected that Non-Disclosure Agreements will be entered into with the short listed bidders at the appropriate time.
- 3.8 The **Cross Country** Franchise provides long distance connectivity through main urban areas as well as providing essential services for people commuting from Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham. The Cross Country Franchise is unusual in that they do not operate any stations. This causes a number of issues for passengers including problems with information provision for passengers at times of delay. Previously engagement with Cross Country has been limited. However, this has recently changed and as part of their Direct Award Contract, funding has been made available to invest in community rail projects within the LEP Area. A meeting between Cross Country and the Authorities is being arranged. A consultation in respect of the next franchise is expected early next year which both Councils will respond to. As chair of WMR's ORDG Clare Horton of Staffordshire County Council is involved in a forthcoming stakeholder workshop.
- 3.9 The **West Coast Partnership** is a partnership between the West Coast Franchise and HS2. Work has been ongoing with the West Coast Franchise competition team at DfT since the team was originally established. Both Authorities have been involved in engagement with the current operator. However, this proves to be difficult at times. To overcome these

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Road and Rail

difficulties both Authorities attend a Strategic Rail Group on a quarterly basis which includes attendance from the freight industry, all operators in the West Midlands and Network Rail. This is also referred to in the Crewe Hub item.

- 4.0 Both Authorities are members of **Rail North Ltd** and have seats on the Association of Rail North Authorities. Both Authorities are actively engaged in the governance and attend relevant meetings. This franchise is quite peripheral to both Authorities; however, it provides an important hourly service from North Staffordshire to Manchester Piccadilly. Experience from being involved in this devolved franchise has enabled best practice to be taken forward into West Midlands Rail Ltd. Improvements include increased frequency of Sunday services to Manchester and new rolling stock. Both Authorities are currently involved in a working group which is looking at how the Hope Valley Line (Manchester to Sheffield) can be used more effectively. This includes the exploration of a semi-fast service being diverted onto the Crewe-Stoke-Derby Line. This will enable some strategic stations along this route to potentially have a direct service to the North West and new destinations in the East Midlands. This could provide an increased frequency of services, increased capacity and the potential for direct services to Manchester Airport and other destinations such as Nottingham for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.
- 4.1 The **Wales and Borders Franchise** has recently been consulted upon for the second time. The County Council responded to this consultation as this Franchise provides late night services on the Shrewsbury Line for Codsall and Bilbrook and also early morning and late evening calls at Stafford going to Birmingham and Chester/Holyhead. Importantly it provides the last northbound service on a Sunday from Birmingham for Stafford and the first train of the day from Stafford to Birmingham Monday to Saturday.
- 4.2 Both local authorities are working to provide responses on both the Crewe Hub and HS2 Phase 2a consultations together with an agreed response from the LEP and Constellation Partnership.

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