

## MARCHES LEP BOARD MEETING PAPER

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	26 November 2019				
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Item 5				
<b>Item Subject:</b>	Transport Officers Group – Update Report				
<b>For:</b>	<b>Discussion</b>		<b>Decision</b>		<b>Information</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Purpose:</b> This Board Report follows a request from the Marches LEP Board to the Marches LEP Transport Officer Group to submit a paper to Board describing the work of the Transport Officers Group and the Group's proposed work plan for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.					
<b>Recommendations:</b> 1) To note the achievements of the Transport Officers Group, as set out in section 2. 2) To note the work programme of the Transport Officers Group, as set out in section 3.					
<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>The Transport Officers Group (TOG) was established in 2013 and reflects the geography of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. The Transport Offices Group brings together transport professionals from Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford &amp; Wrekin Councils with colleagues from the Department for Transport, Highways England, Transport for Wales and Midlands Connect. Recognising the strong trade links between The Marches area and mid Wales, representatives of the Welsh Government and Growing Mid Wales partnership are also included in the Group. The Group meets every two months to monitor and drive forward progress on the LEP's transport investment programme.</p> <p>The Group's Terms of Reference commit the Group to delivering the transport schemes and projects that will deliver the Vision of the Marches LEP as set out in the Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan. With this ambition the Group has commissioned several reports, worked with operators and with scheme promoters and continues to lobby for further improvements and funding for investment in the Marches and Mid-Wales transport network.</p>					
<p><b>2. Achievements of the Transport Officers Group</b></p> <p>In May 2016, The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership adopted the Investing in Strategic Transport Corridors in the Marches report. This report sets out a transport investment programme for The Marches strategic transport corridors that are vital to deliver economic growth across the region through reducing journey times and improving their reliability. The report focuses on the strategic road and rail network. Schemes on these networks require significant central government funding and will deliver benefits at a local, regional and national level. The following achievements can be reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A5 / A483 corridor improvements: Funding has been secured to commission a cross border study. A draft report has been produced with key stakeholder engagement programmed for December and a final version expected for publication early in the New Year.</li> <li>• A49 Hereford Relief Road and Southern link: Whilst Herefordshire Council has made good progress in delivering these schemes, the Council recently decided to pause work on the projects, review the schemes and look at other options.</li> <li>• A53 Shrewsbury North West Relief Road: Funding was awarded in March this year. A planning application is expected in spring next year with the potential for a public inquiry in 2021. The</li> </ul>					

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road is programmed to open in spring 2023.

- B4361 Leominster Southern Link Road: A Leominster transport strategy containing the Southern Link Road has been completed which sets out next steps to achieve delivery of the road and the complementary measures.
- M6 / M6 Toll / M54 link road: Public consultation held during spring 2019. Highways England propose submitting an application for a Development Consent Order in 2020.
- Marches railway line service enhancements: Transport for Wales' rail franchise commitments include improved Marches railway line services and West Midlands Trains rail franchise commitments include Shrewsbury to Birmingham railway line frequency enhancements, which were introduced during May 2019.

The **Marches & Mid Wales Freight Strategy** was completed during February 2018. This strategy provides an evidence base to determine the transport projects that will support the economic development and operational efficiency of businesses in the Marches and Mid Wales, while also seeking to enhance the quality of life of its residents and reduce environmental impacts from freight transport activity.

Since then the Transport Officer Group has commissioned consultants to develop a **Joint Appraisal Framework** (JAF) to enable prioritisation of the Freight Strategy delivery programme. The JAF will enable the Marches LEP to establish an evidence-based programme prioritising those schemes best suited to improve road transport within and through the Marches and Mid Wales area.

A particular requirement was to prioritise the road projects which will improve connectivity and resilience in what is a predominantly rural area with a highly dispersed population, few routes and with significant numbers of slow-moving vehicles.

The Joint Appraisal Framework was also required to:

- Be compliant with the Department for Transport and Welsh Government transport analysis guidance
- Show a clear link to the conditional outcomes sought by the Midlands Connect transport strategy, in particular how the schemes in the prioritised programme would enable improved journey times and reliability and so deliver improved competitiveness in the Midlands and mid-Wales, through improved access to markets, labour and supply chains as well as by supporting innovation.

This first phase was completed in June 2018.

Phase two of the Joint Appraisal Framework was commissioned in February 2019. This phase of the commission uses the spreadsheet tool established in phase 1 of the commission in combination with the latest Traffic Master data, to produce a prioritised road investment programme for the Mid Wales and Marches area. The intention is to refresh the programme set out in the Investing in Strategic Transport Corridors in the Marches report. A final report from phase 2 of the commission will be available in December 2019.

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### 3. Future work of the Transport Officers Group

Building on recent commissions and following discussion at the Transport Officers Group the group has developed the following work programme for 2019/2020, and 2020/2021 to help deliver the vision of the Marches LEP.

#### **Strategic Transport Corridors**

The group will continue to lobby and support scheme promoters to access funding and deliver the projects that are critical to the long-term success of the Marches region.

#### **Critical Friend on aspirations and projects involving or influencing transport**

The Marches Transport Officers Group will continue to provide a 'Critical Friend' service providing advice and information to organisations that are promoting transport interventions in the Marches (e.g. Councils, Local Enterprise Partnership, Highways England and Midlands Connect).

Examples include:

- North Wales and Marches Strategic Transport Group study into improving the A5 and A483 routes from the north of Shropshire into the County Borough of Wrexham.
- Highways England M6 to M54 link road
- Midlands Connect studies on road and rail in the area.

#### **Adviser to the Local Enterprise Partnership and its Board on transport decisions**

Similarly, the Transport Officer Group is available to provide advice and recommendations to the Local Enterprise Partnership and its Board on how transport can contribute to the successful delivery of the Partnership's priorities. This involves providing advice to the Partnership in respect of their approach to strategic transport planning by responding to consultations or by providing data, analysis and advice, particularly in respect of establishing delivery programmes and funding bids.

This could include advice relating to emerging priorities, examples include the readiness of our network for autonomous and ultra-low emissions vehicles.

#### **Reviewing strategic level changes in forecast network capacity**

The Transport Officers Group propose inviting national network operators and local authorities to present to the Group information that demonstrates they have procedures and projects in place that will ensure the impact of extreme weather events on transport networks are being effectively managed. Of particular interest is that the network is sufficiently resilient in the face of the effects of climate change and extreme weather events.

#### **Understanding the potential role of demand management in delivery of the LEP's objectives.**

There is evidence available that indicates that a significant proportion of vehicles using the strategic

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road network in the Marches LEP area are short, often less than two miles in length. These journeys could be made by more active means, particularly by bike, on foot or by bus. These car journeys reduce the capacity of the strategic road network for those journeys where no alternatives exist leading to congestion, journey time delay and unreliability, and high levels of CO2 emissions.

**Financial implications:**

- None

**Legal Implications:**

- None

**Risks, opportunities and impacts:**

- The Transport Officers Group plays an active role in the development of strategies and appraisal frameworks in driving forward the LEP's transport investment programme. The group is well positioned to respond to emerging opportunities, attracting investment into the region.

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