

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Brighton Mainline Alliance</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>6 February 2018</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The highly successful Coast to Capital LEP area, which runs from South London to Brighton and across the coast to Chichester, needs significant long-term rail investment to support a growing regional economy and maintain its competitive advantage. Addressing this strategic issue will protect both the economic potential of the region and the significant contribution that it makes to the wider economy.
- 1.2 Network Rail has identified the Brighton Mainline (BML) as the top priority for investment in the region and proposed upgrades include enhancement to the Windmill Bridge Junction, just outside East Croydon Station, and a major redevelopment of the station itself.
- 1.3 The Windmill Bridge Junction scheme has been developed by Network Rail, and would bring much-needed investment to the large railway junction north of East Croydon station and would deliver a significant increase in regional rail capacity. Unlocking the bottleneck at Windmill Bridge Junction will enhance capacity, connectivity and resilience, and drive growth and productivity throughout the region. This is vital for links to London, as well as international connectivity.
- 1.4 It will be a costly and complex scheme, with national significance, and Government has recently commissioned further work to develop the business case. Funding cannot be taken for granted, with many other regions of the UK also proposing their own railway schemes for development.
- 1.5 Coast to Capital is leading a regional campaign to target Government investment in the rail infrastructure in Croydon, specifically targeting a Government commitment to the detail of the project at Budget 2019. The campaign, which is called the "Brighton Mainline Alliance", is currently backed by around 40 regional businesses and business organisations<sup>1</sup> and has strong cross-party support from 16 MPs from all across the LEP region.

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<sup>1</sup> The full list of current Brighton Mainline Alliance members and MPs to have pledged their support to the campaign can be seen in Appendix 2

- 1.6 It is vital to have explicit support from as many large businesses in the area as possible – to show our joined-up commitment to the development of the region, and to build strong business voices from our region to encourage Government to support the growth of the regional economy.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Greater Brighton Economic Board adds its support and voice to those campaigning for the Windmill Junction Scheme, by becoming a member of the Brighton Mainline Alliance.

- 2.2 That the Board promotes the activities of the Alliance through its networks and contacts.

## **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- 3.1 With a population of 1.9 million and a contribution of £49.7bn GVA to the UK economy, the Coast to Capital area is the 7th largest regional economy in the country. Greater Brighton forms a significant part of both the LEP area's population and output, with a population of around 820,000 and GVA contribution of £21.1bn. As a key part of the net-contributing South-East economy, the Greater Brighton City Region and wider LEP region are vital to overall UK growth and prosperity.

- 3.2 Part of the reason for this high economic contribution is the LEP region's high levels of employment, with around 90,000 businesses offering more than 800,000 jobs to a well-educated workforce (45% of the working age population is educated to degree level or above, compared to a national average of 38%).

- 3.3 Businesses in the Coast to Capital region currently benefit from several competitive advantages. As well as an educated workforce, businesses also benefit from the international connectivity provided by Gatwick Airport, the world's most productive single runway airport. Proximity to London and a mobile population (33% commute over 10km to get to work) also contribute to the region's economic success.

- 3.4 Furthermore, the London-Gatwick-Brighton Growth Corridor has been recognised as one of nine corridors in England that have been at the heart of growth over the last decade<sup>2</sup> and are likely to maintain a pivotal role in shaping growth in the future. The Corridor, which stretches along the BML and M23/A23 routes, creates key strategic linkages between Croydon, Crawley, Gatwick and Brighton & Hove – the benefits of which cascade across the region.

- 3.5 However, recent growth has been slower than other parts of the South East, with 16.5% GVA growth since 2010, compared to 19.5% across the South East. Raising GVA per head from £24,900 to £28,000 (South East average) would add around £5.7bn to the Coast to Capital (and national) economy. There is strong

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2014/where-growth-happens-the-high-growth-index-of-places.pdf>

evidence to suggest poor rail infrastructure is suppressing growth in the region and negatively influencing strategic investment decisions from business.

- 3.6 Achieving the Coast to Capital region's economic potential depends on securing fit-for-purpose rail infrastructure and services that will drive growth.
- 3.7 Passenger journeys on Southern and Thameslink services have risen by 10% to 105 million per annum in the past five years and Network Rail predicts increasingly severe crowding on trains, driven by the region's growing economy. Commuter journeys have already risen accordingly, to jobs in London (which drives 10,000 commuters per hour on Southern route during weekday peak), but also in Croydon, the Gatwick Diamond and Brighton.
- 3.8 The BML is central to the infrastructure of the region, with passengers accessing key interchange points, such as Clapham Junction, East Croydon, Gatwick Airport and Brighton. The line acts as a commuter route, but also as a driver of economic growth for the entire region.
- 3.9 Railways are always complex pieces of infrastructure, but the service in the Coast to Capital region suffers particularly badly from disruption caused by operational, maintenance and renewal issues. Many of these are detailed in the recent Gibb report<sup>3</sup> including:
- Chronic operational problems caused by industrial disputes
  - Operational disruption in recent years from the impact of the London Bridge improvement works
  - Ongoing impact of the introduction of a new fleet, new franchise geography and next, a new timetable
  - Historic deficit on maintenance, with £300 million recently allocated to fix it.

These are serious problems, but it is important that they do not obscure the need for major long-term investment in the railway to build in the capacity that the region needs to support predicted future growth.

- 3.10 Significant work from Network Rail, backed up by independent analysis commissioned by the Government, confirms the strong business case for investment in the Brighton Mainline:
- The upgrade programme is the "highest priority investment in the corridor" and should be progressed during a window of opportunity in Control Period 6 (from 2019)
  - Central Croydon is developing quickly, and land needed to deliver the necessary scheme is under pressure for alternative development. Without beginning the Transport and Works Act process, it is possible that the land will be lost to developers
  - Long lead times for schemes of this nature mean if key decisions are taken now, the main works could commence in the early 2020s

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/619795/chris-gibb-report-southern-rail.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/619795/chris-gibb-report-southern-rail.pdf)

- Increasing demand to travel will exceed capacity of the new rolling stock within 10 years, unless improvements are made. Commuters along the route will increasingly need to stand, and demand will quickly reach 150% of available capacity at key stations in Croydon, Surrey and Sussex.

3.11 The fundamental obstacle to increased capacity and resilience on the BML is the bottleneck in the Windmill Bridge Junction area to the North of East Croydon Station. With the lines from Victoria and London Bridge joining a number of suburban lines, the complexity of the junctions in the Selhurst Triangle area means that trains are often required to stop and wait for each other before continuing their progress. This adds delays to existing services and inhibits the capacity of the entire line.

3.12 Therefore, the main focus of the upgrade programme is the Windmill Bridge Junction redesign, which would introduce grade separation (flyovers) for the major junctions and increase throughput and efficiency on the line. Further, the addition of two new platforms at East Croydon will reduce congestion there and provide a major development opportunity above the station.

3.13 Upgrading the line will result in a number of direct and tangible benefits:

Capacity:

- More trains per hour at peak times (from 36 today increased to 42-44)
- More trains at peak times would result in a significant increase in capacity

Connectivity:

- Opportunity to run new services
- More options in timetable development

Resilience:

- Increased reliability, addressing the “poor and unreliable condition” of the network as identified in the Gibb Report

Productivity:

- Value for money (estimated benefits of £2.40 for every £1 spent)
- Commercial opportunities to redevelop and improve stations
- Encouraging growth in the C2C region by bringing business out from London

## 4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The BML is a key transport and infrastructure priority for Greater Brighton. Transport for the South East is the Sub-National Transport Body that is currently meeting in shadow form. In the future the Board will use its membership of Transport for the South East to press the case for investment in the BML and other crucial infrastructure, and the Board will also use a number of other channels to repeat this same message. Greater Brighton can and will still continue to use existing and future networks as a member of the Brighton Mainline Alliance.

- 4.2 The alternative option is for the Greater Brighton Economic Board not to lend its direct support to the Alliance. However, if Greater Brighton gets behind the Alliance there will be a direct benefit in terms of a stronger combined voice calling for this crucial project to make the Windmill Bridge Junction fit-for-purpose, and it would raise the profile of both the campaign and for Greater Brighton as a leader in the LEP area.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 None required

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Board is asked to note the importance to the BML of the Windmill Bridge Junction enhancements, and to offer its direct support to the scheme by joining the Brighton Mainline Alliance.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Greater Brighton Economic Board becoming a member of the Brighton Mainline Alliance. Board members may incur costs associated with supporting and promoting the campaign and should this happen these will be met from the Board's existing budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen*

*Date: 16/1/18*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland*

*Date: 09/1/18*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 None.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 None.

### Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Brighton Mainline Alliance Campaign Leaflet

2. Current members and supporters of the Brighton Mainline Alliance

**Background Documents:**

None