

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

20 June 2025

Agenda Item 5

2025/26 Business Plan and Work Programme

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Agrees the final work programme for 2025/26, reflecting emerging work in support of both integration of East West Rail and the government's focus on the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.**
- b) Considers and agrees the role that EEH should play in supporting wider infrastructure conversations particularly around power and digital connectivity.**
- c) Notes the aspiration for a long-term funding settlement for STBs, for the duration of the Spending Review.**
- d) Notes the letters seeking annual partner contributions for 2025/26, as agreed in March 2025, will be sent following the meeting.**
- e) Agrees to the principle of moving Strategic Transport Leadership Board meetings to being on Thursdays to better manage diary conflicts.**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The paper provides Board members with the programme of activity for EEH for 2025/26.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. In February 2025, the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to EEH to confirm our Departmental funding settlement for 2025/26. The settlement was based on EEH's work programme, as agreed by the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in September 2024.
- 2.2. The Government's Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor team, led by Lord Vallance, is now fully operational. EEH, as one of the key partnerships in the region, has been identified as having an important role to play.
- 2.3. Increasingly, it is not just transport infrastructure that requires support in order to unlock economic opportunity: it is as much digital connectivity and power.
- 2.4. In support of EEH's activity, the Board agreed to continue local contributions during 2025/26. Letters relating to local contributions will be sent following the Board meeting, with a deadline for receipt of contributions by end of October 2025.
- 2.5. It has been suggested that Thursdays may be a more appropriate day for the EEH Strategic Leadership Board to meet. Board Members are asked to consider this proposal.

Context

3. Programme of Work 2025/2026

- 3.1. In February 2025, the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to EEH to confirm our Departmental funding settlement for 2025/26. This followed submission of a one-year business plan agreed by the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in September 2024.
- 3.2. The Secretary of State's letter particularly noted EEH's work, under the leadership of this Strategic Transport Leadership Board, in support of the Government's missions and the way in which EEH has worked collaboratively with the Department for Transport and our delivery bodies as a supportive partner. This is a recognised strength of EEH, one that is embedded in our origins as a partnership that was created, and is governed and supported financially by the region's local authorities.
- 3.3. The funding settlement received for 2025/26 is £1,522,667. This represents an increase of £96,667 on previous years. Additional funds were not provided to all STBs but allocated to EEH in recognition of our role in supporting the wider work of partners and government, including the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.
- 3.4. Since the Board last met in March 2025, the Government's Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor team, hosted in HM Treasury and led by Lord Vallance, is fully operational. EEH, as one of the key partnerships in the region, has been identified as having an important role to play not least in supporting local partners to secure Government's commitment to those transport schemes that are vital to realising the economic growth that this region can achieve.
- 3.5. This, along with our commitment to maximising the impact of East West Rail as a transformational transport scheme for all parts of the region, has given increased impetus to ensuring the EEH work programme for 2025/26 is focused on achieving deliverable outcomes on the ground.
- 3.6. The work programme, set out in Annex 1, has not changed significantly as a result of the creation of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. There are however a small number of focus areas where EEH's evidence, analytical capability and technical knowledge can be used to support the Growth Corridor programme and ensure it is aligning with local and regional priorities.
- 3.7. In addition to the core work programme, EEH has received a further £225,000 to support the legacy of East West Rail, taking forward specific projects around transport integration and a quality of life strand (including tourism and supporting the wider environmental and economic opportunities that could be enabled by EWR).

4. Wider Infrastructure Considerations – Digital and Power

- 4.1. Across the region, consideration of economic growth options will often identify key transport infrastructure requirements which, without investment in them, will result in a sub-optimal economic environment for businesses and communities to flourish. It is at this point where EEH, supported by our evidence and analysis, can work with local authority partners to prioritise transport infrastructure requirements and make the case for their delivery.
- 4.2. However, increasingly, it is not just transport infrastructure that requires support to unlock economic opportunity: it is as much digital connectivity and power.
- 4.3. EEH has long been a supporter of improved digital connectivity and programmes such as England's Connected Heartland¹ demonstrate the importance of local authorities working together to deliver better digital outcomes for the region.

¹ [Home - England's Connected Heartland](#)



- 4.4. Recently, the creation of OFGEM's Regional Energy strategic Plans (RESP) on the same geography as sub national transport bodies reinforces the important link between infrastructure types. EEH is working with the newly formed RESP team for this region.
- 4.5. As we look towards the work programme for 2025/26, including the emerging opportunities and expectations of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, EEH is increasingly becoming involved in discussions about solutions to wider infrastructure challenges. These, and the resultant actions from them, are intended to be in support of individual local and combined authority needs and at the same time, through our convening role presents an opportunity for the region to draw on shared expertise, learning and ambition.

5. Spending Review 2025

- 5.1. The Spending Review, published on 11 June 2025, confirmed the funding settlement for every government department for the years up to 2029/2030, including the Department for Transport.
- 5.2. While the headline figures have been announced, it is expected that there will be further clarity about the Spending Review over the coming weeks. This will include publication of: the Industrial Strategy; a 10 Year Infrastructure Strategy and the conclusion of the DfT's Capital Projects Review.
- 5.3. The conclusion of the Spending Review marks an opportunity for EEH to work with DfT to secure a multi-year settlement for our work. In securing this, EEH will be much more able to plan, prioritise and stretch our ambition for how we can continue to support our local, regional and national partners going forward.
- 5.4. Officers will work with DfT over the coming months to seek the clarity we need over future years. It is on the back of this clarity that we will be best placed to develop a longer term Business Plan up to 2030.

6. Local contributions

- 6.1. Each financial year our constituent member authorities make 'local' financial contributions towards EEH. This is a vital part of the EEH funding programme as it provides important support to cover communications, effective engagement activities with the government, MPs and other key decision makers, some operational costs and a proportion of staff costs.
- 6.2. Recognising the continued pressure on local government finances, EEH does not take the request for local contributions lightly. To minimise the impact on partners, it was agreed that local contributions would be held at 2024/25 levels.
- 6.3. By investing in EEH, local partners retain the organisation as a locally-led body with flexibility to deliver local priorities. At the same time, EEH's local contributions are able to lever a significant uplift in government programme funding to plan strategic transport investment in the region.
- 6.4. The staff within the EEH team are a regional resource that all partners are able to work with and benefit from. During 2025/26, EEH staff will maintain a tight focus on how we can further support local partners to bring added value – aiming consistently to bring added value well in above the level of local contributions that have been leveraged.
- 6.5. The flat rate contribution does not reflect the cost increases that EEH will face in the year ahead, due primarily to inflation. While this may present EEH with potential challenges, EEH staff remain committed to resolving these pressures through efficiencies, just as our local partners are having to do.
- 6.6. Letters relating to local contributions will be sent following the Board meeting, with a deadline for receipt of contributions by end of October 2025.



7. Meeting Dates

- 7.1. As a key body for convening partners across the region and, particularly given growing interest from Government's Oxford – Cambridge growth corridor team to work with EEH, Leaders and Mayors will want to ensure that the EEH Board has the right representation from their authorities: most commonly the Leader or Mayor themselves.
- 7.2. Given pressures on diaries, it has been suggested that Thursdays may be a more appropriate day for the EEH Strategic Leadership Board to meet. If Leaders and Mayors agree, it is proposed that this shift take place from July 2025 onwards.

Naomi Green
Managing Director
June 2025

Annex 1

England's Economic Heartland 2025 – 2026 Work Programme

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Deliverables
Prioritising and Planning		DfT Programme Spend - £290,000 <i>including staff costs to deliver work in house</i>
1	Integrated Transport (Strategy and Implementation)	<p>Maximising the impact of East West Rail and leveraging it as a trigger for transformational change in the delivery of a once in a generation new approach change to planning integrated transport across the region; EEH will develop an action focused regional Integrated Transport Plan. The Plan will set out how all of EEH's (mode-specific) work strands will be brought together and integrated into a single approach for the region – complementing at all levels existing and future ambitions of our local and combined authority partners. The work will ensure the transport system is planned as a single network with housing and economic growth opportunities embedded. Innovation will be at the forefront of the approach, bringing together existing activity along with further aspiration for innovative funding approaches, and innovation in the way we collaborate and deliver – across sectors, modes and technologies.</p> <p>Impact and delivery pathways will be monitored to share experience and speed up delivery.</p> <p>In local areas, we will work with local authority partners to support specific integrated transport solutions, such as planning bus services across a wider geography.</p>
2	Roads	<p>As well as activity to support and secure investment in the region's road investment priorities, specific funds will be put aside to support further work on the Smart Junctions Project. The project is identifying ways, at a pan regional level, that we can maximise capacity on the existing road network through better strategic network management. The work has completed phase 1 with phase 2 to be rolled out as part of our 2025/26 programme.</p>
3	Freight – A small contribution to the Regional Freight Forum and the South East Freight Partnership.	Work on the regional freight forum and SE freight partnership is ongoing, led by TfSE.
4	Responding to Government Priorities	EEH remains committed to on going support for Government priorities, providing a continuous link between local partners, government and its delivery agencies.

		Work will be taken forward where with local partners have identified a specific need and a reason for needing support at the strategic level.
5	Improved monitoring and evaluation and approaches to lessons learnt	There is a need to improve the way transport is planned and prioritised, learning lessons from previous activity and monitoring and evaluation. A real terms decrease in budgets is preventing EEH from commencing work, including developing a pan regional approach to climate change resilience and mitigation on our transport system. Costs to EEH will be in staff time only.
6	Integration across the Wider South East Rail Network	This programme, identified by TfL, TfSE, Transport East and Great British Railways as a significant opportunity to explore how the rail network can better support housing, economic growth as well as wider social and environmental outcomes in the outer London/beyond London borders where car use is significantly higher than in neighbouring boroughs of London.
Improving and Integrating		DfT Programme Spend £510,000 <i>including staff costs to deliver programme activity</i>
1	Rail	<p>This work is enabling us to act quickly when an opportunity arises, and to ensure our rail service aspirations receive the right level of engagement across the new integrated rail body, the sector and Government. EEH's rail work is enabling places across the region to maximise alignment with rail services, thinking about the railway as a driver for economic and housing growth, decarbonisation and realising better connectivity for all communities. The EEH approach focuses on how we can leverage the most impact out of existing services and planned investments as well as identifying smaller scale interventions that, should they become viable, will have the most impact.</p> <p>Leading thinking and providing secretariat for the wider South East Rail Partnership, Ely Taskforce and East West Main Line Partnership.</p> <p>Working with partners to ensure Oxford-Milton Keynes section of East West Rail opens successfully (2025) and supporting the East West Rail DCO process.</p> <p>Supporting Network Rail to take forward the next stage of work on Ely Area Capacity Enhancements.</p> <p>In local areas, we will work with local authority partners to support specific rail solutions, such as exploring the role of rail connectivity in Oxfordshire, in support of the local authority and the Oxford Growth Commission's work.</p>

2	Bus	<p>Further building on current activity (which will complete spring 2025) work will be designed to ensure the Government's plan for buses can be implemented in the best way for the region, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing regional route proposals; - Connecting places of strategic importance, as agreed by EEH Board - Developing (and implementing where viable in the short term) propositions for network reform. <p>Propositions are being developed to be innovative in approach and provide the evidence base that can support ambitious future bus funding and effective approaches to planning the region's public transport network.</p>
3	Mobility Hubs Pilot	Working with local authorities to roll out identification of locations tool and process.
4	Innovation Funding and Pump Priming	An ongoing and important part of EEH's offer - small amounts of funding that can be used towards bid development for both innovation funding and to develop models for innovative funding of transport schemes. In both cases, the potential for securing much larger funding opportunities can be realised. EEH had some major innovation funding in 2024/25 but this cannot be rolled forward into 2025/26 so we will need to continue to look for new opportunities.
5	Active Travel Investment Strategy	Developing and launching the case for investment in the Varsity Way.
6	Capacity Support for EWR	A significant opportunity to support the way all local partners can work with and maximise the successful delivery of East West Rail.
7	EEH support for Bus Networks delivery (EPs, Franchising)	Not currently funded but EEH remains keen to explore opportunities to pilot bus network delivery models.
Analysis and Excellence		<p>DfT Programme Spend £576,000</p> <p><i>including staff costs to deliver programme activity</i></p>
1	Technical capability and tool development	<p>Including local transport plan support and further updates and roll out of tools including the CAP and EV infrastructure tool (including staff time and regular support to local authorities). Roll out of tools and workshops throughout 2025 with an ongoing feedback loop with LTAs to show effectiveness.</p> <p><u>Tools to include:</u></p> <p>Highways Assignment Model (inc. license and application) Pan STB EV tool Carbon Analysis Playbook tool (CAP) and transport carbon baseline Mobility hubs tool Bus tool (bid booster)</p>

2	Common Analytical Framework (CAF)	Additional costs (EEH staff time) to ensure EEH is capable of leveraging DfT investment into TfN CAF programme. This will include: Data/model development for EEH, alignment of tools and staff to manage the development of the CAF in a way that brings consistency across all seven STBs.
3	Data Bank and Platform	Funds to continue to support, develop and enhance the regional evidence base, including local authority, growth board, Cambridge-Oxford PRP and other partner engagement to ensure single data set(s) for the region. Evolution of Cadence, annual license updates of development and housing data (D-log/I-LOG) and other analytical tools.
4	Progressing investment pipeline (scheme development)	<p>Collation of evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to help shape investment priorities and the wider regional investment narrative. Costs include working with partners within EEH and across the wider South East. Ongoing work with the investment framework outputs – further development of strategic case (leveraging mobility, socio economic data and land-use models).</p> <p>The data and evidence provides important support to National Highways and Network Rail decision making. (Staff time only)</p>
5	Partner Support	Ongoing partner intelligence and support, including policy intelligence, ongoing engagement and sharing expertise. Responding to specific LA needs and unique economic opportunities
6	Capacity and Capability Centre of Excellence	Scrutiny and review of funding propositions, continuation of the design of the capacity and capability programme including master class series. Supporting LTAs in delivery of Major Scheme Business Cases and local priorities (such as future Bus investment proposals).
7	Skills Development (including University Engagement)	<p>Establishing the EEH careers networks and supporting competency approach</p> <p>Continued Roll out of masterclass programme.</p> <p>Strengthening alignment with the region's universities.</p>
8	Forum Management and supporting cross sector engagement (staff time and building partnerships)	<p>Ongoing work to ensure the smooth running of the organisation, stakeholder management and growing partnerships.</p> <p>Our regional forums include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directors' Group - Transport Officer Group - Decarbonisation Working Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation Working Group - Regional Bus Forum - Active Travel Forum - Capacity and Capability Forum - Connectivity Study Programme Boards - STB EV Group - Freight Working Group - Ely Taskforce - EEH Delivery Partners
Accountable Body Costs	£50,000
Other EEH Costs (funded by local contributions)	£420,000 Including staff time to manage business operations, travel, office and meeting costs, engagement and communications activity and professional memberships.
EEH Reserves	£430,000 (funded by EEH)
Total DfT Programme Spend	£1,523,000 (including all programme staff costs)