

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

11 July 2025

Agenda Item 5

Securing investment in the region

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Leadership Board:

- a) Notes the publication of the Government's Ten-Year Infrastructure Strategy and imminent infrastructure pipeline, considers their implications and agrees to invite NISTA to come and speak to the Board in September 2025**
- b) Agrees the updated 2025/26 Business Plan – following feedback from the Board in June 2025**
- c) Agrees that EEH's should continue to advocate for investment in those infrastructure projects set out in the multiyear Spending Review proposal, and notes work underway to do so**
- d) Notes the light touch update to the transport strategy, putting the region in the strongest position to secure the investment required**
- e) Considers EEH's role in responding to major economic opportunities or national policy decisions should be determined on a case by case basis and reported back to the Board.**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To update the Strategic Transport Leadership Board on EEH's work to secure investment in the region's transport infrastructure.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. Our region is pivotal to the Government's economic growth mission, but its success will not be achieved without the essential investment required in improved transport infrastructure.
- 2.2. In December 2024, the Strategic Transport Leadership Board agreed EEH's submission to the multiyear Spending Review, where it made the case for investment in priorities which unlock economic growth while supporting net zero and quality of life.
- 2.3. Since then, the publication of the Ten-Year Infrastructure Strategy sets out the Government's approach to coordinating infrastructure investment prioritisation and delivery. Against a backdrop of a challenging fiscal environment and emerging, fast paced policy decisions, it is vital that this region makes the strongest case possible for investment in our critical infrastructure priorities.

3. Context

- 3.1. One year since the change of Government, the last few weeks have been a busy period of announcements and policy statements which have the potential to impact our region.

- 3.2. The EEH area, with its nationally significant clusters of knowledge-intensive sectors, is pivotal to the Government's missions. However, it is crucial that the region secures the investment it needs to unlock our economic opportunities.
- 3.3. The publication of the Government's Ten-Year Infrastructure Strategy marks an important moment where EEH, as a partnership of local authorities must make sure the region's priorities are well documented and there is an ongoing plan for collaboration and advocacy. This region's Spending Review submission set out the key regional priorities that need to be supported if this region is to realise our potential.
- 3.4. This paper sets out the steps we are taking to contribute towards this ambition.

4. Ten Year Infrastructure Strategy

- 4.1. The ten-year infrastructure strategy is the authorship of the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) – which was established on 1 April 2025. NISTA is a joint unit of both HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office and combines the functions of the former National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and the Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA). It is supported by a Council of Expert Advisers¹.
- 4.2. As well as preparing a long-term infrastructure strategy, NISTA will provide oversight of best practice delivery and advise government departments on top-priority projects, financing options, and strategic planning, helping them overcome delivery challenges. To support this, NISTA will develop an infrastructure pipeline portal (see below).
- 4.3. In June 2025, the Government published NISTA's ten-year infrastructure strategy. The strategy is intended to set out a long-term vision for infrastructure across a broad range of sectors including: transport, energy, water, flood risk management, digital connectivity, and waste, alongside social infrastructure like housing and public services.
- 4.4. While a long-term strategy with an ambition to create stability, attract private investment, and support British supply chains and jobs is to be welcomed, it is essential that the plan is met with sufficient funding to deliver those infrastructure projects that are critical to the economic success of the UK. Many of these projects, such as the need to address major road pinch points in the Heartland region, have been well understood for some time and if not addressed, run the risk of being major barriers to this region realising its economic potential, in turn affecting the economic success of the UK as a whole.
- 4.5. Included in the infrastructure strategy were the following commitments:

- Funding for transport

£15.6 billion has been allocated specifically for regional transport and local infrastructure intended to:

- Improve connectivity between towns, cities, and rural areas.
- Upgrade local roads, bus networks, and rail links.
- Support active travel infrastructure like cycling and walking routes.

The funding has been allocated to areas outside of London and the south east, reflecting policy decisions around devolution and investment in other areas of the UK.

The strategy also commits £24bn of capital funding between 2026-27 and 2029-30 for National Highways and local authorities to maintain and improve the SRN and local road network. The strategy recommitted to delivering EWR between Bletchley and Cambridge, referencing the £2.5bn commitment made in the 2025 Spending Review.

We still await confirmation of investment priorities for the third roads investment period and future rail investment.

¹ [New Council of Expert Advisors appointed in NISTA - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-council-of-expert-advisors-appointed-in-nista)



Infrastructure Pipeline Digital Portal

An interactive infrastructure pipeline portal will launch in July 2025, coordinated by NISTA, with the intention of:

- Tracking upcoming infrastructure projects
- Aligning local development plans with national infrastructure timelines
- Allowing suppliers to engage earlier in the planning and procurement process.

Encouraging Private Sector Investment

The strategy recognises the need for continuous and sustained investment and seeks to draw in private sector investment to 'complement and maximise' the value of public sector investment already underway. It identifies three routes to doing so:

- Supporting the supply of private capital into the UK Infrastructure market
- Matching different sources of capital to investment opportunities
- Ensuring a transparent pipeline of projects.

Review of the HM Treasury Green Book Appraisal

The strategy set out the Government's ambitions to review the Green Book appraisal process, with a view to an updated Green Book being published in at the start of 2026. The review has an ambition to:

- Consider how it appraises investment projects to provide 'objective, transparent advice on public investment across the country, including outside London and the south-east of England'
- Introduce 'place-based business cases' that bring together the different projects that are needed to achieve the objectives of a particular place
- Simplify and shorten the Green Book
- Continue to address the over-emphasis on benefit-cost ratios (BCRs)

- Integrated Spatial Planning

The strategy introduced regional spatial development strategies, coordinated by Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

The intention is that regional spatial development strategies will align transport infrastructure with housing, employment, and environmental goals, ensuring that infrastructure is better matched to population growth and travel patterns.

- 4.6. There are some important considerations around the Ten-Year Infrastructure Strategy for the EEH Board, not least ensuring the region's infrastructure priorities are well understood and effectively captured. Through our engagement with government, EEH continuously presses the need for investment in key infrastructure priorities without which, this region can not realise its potential for our economy, communities, businesses and environment.

Reflecting the evolution of NISTA, and the need to continue to advocate for investment in this region, the remainder of this paper sets out some of the key activities that EEH is taking forward to ensure this region is well represented and supported.



5. 2025/26 Work programme

- 5.1. In March 2025, the Board agreed the local contributions for financial year 2025/26. Recognising the continued pressure on local government finances it was agreed that local contributions were to be held at 2024/25 levels. Partners will now have received contribution requests for 2025/26, sent following the June Board meeting.
- 5.2. In June 2025, the proposed work programme for 2025/26, to be funded by DfT and previously agreed by the Board was presented. This programme formed of multiple workstreams under: planning and priorities, improving and integrating and analysis and excellence.



- 5.3. The work plan assumed, rather than explicitly set out, the core and primary role of EEH as an STB: to work collaboratively to set a strategy for regional connectivity and identify those infrastructure priorities that remain priority investments in order to realise that connectivity. The work plan has been corrected to ensure DfT, government as a whole and all partners remain focused on realising these core priorities. The revised work plan is available in annex 1. This is complemented by an update on EEH's Spending Review and thematic priorities (see section 6 below).
- 5.4. During the financial year 2025/26, there will be an increased focus on delivery of projects in-house, reducing the need for spending on external consultants. Commissioning will focus on technical and specialist advice to support projects that support and maintain pace of delivery.

6. EEH priorities table

- 6.1. In addition to the revised business plan, we have also produced 'at a glance' tables which detail, at a high level, the work EEH is doing to progress agreed priorities.
- 6.2. These are in annex 2. The first table shows our work on the infrastructure and service priorities identified within our Spending Review 2025 submission, which previously came before this Board. The second table lists additional, thematic priorities which EEH is working on.
- 6.3. It is our intention for the table to be presented and updated within the Business Unit Update paper at subsequent Boards, ensuring greater transparency and scrutiny of the Business Unit's activities.
- 6.4. We welcome Board's comments and suggestions on the priorities and work presented within the two tables.
- 6.5. Members will note that supporting infrastructure for new towns has been placed as an entry in the table following feedback from the last meeting. Board may also wish to steer EEH towards work which provides deeper understanding of the surface access requirements of the three major airports in (or very close to) the Heartland.

7. Regional Transport Strategy

- 7.1. A core requirement of a sub national transport body, as set out in the 2016 Cities and Local Government Devolution Act² is to facilitate the development and implementation of a transport strategy for the area served by that STB. The role of STBs has subsequently been confirmed in the English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024³ and while unconfirmed as yet, we are not expecting the imminent English Devolution Bill to amend those provisions for STBs that were set out in the original 2016 Act.
- 7.2. As such, it will remain a requirement of an STB to produce a regional transport strategy. The key priority will be to develop any future strategy in a way that builds on strategies and priorities that have been developed/are in development by local and combined authority partners across the region.
- 7.3. EEH's [transport strategy](#) was published in 2021, following a period of engagement and consultation with partners and wider stakeholders. It is a long-term strategy, focused on transport infrastructure priorities to 2050.
- 7.4. The strategy set out the Board's vision for a transport system that could '*support sustainable growth and improve quality of life and wellbeing through a world-class, decarbonised transport system which harnesses the region's global expertise in technology and innovation to unlock new opportunities for residents and businesses, in a way that benefits the UK as a whole.*'
- 7.5. The current strategy has four principles.

² [Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016](#)

³ [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)



- Achieving net zero carbon emissions from transport no later than 2050, with an ambition to reach this by 2040
- Improving quality of life and wellbeing through a safe and inclusive transport system accessible to all which emphasises sustainable and active travel
- Supporting the regional economy by connecting people and businesses to markets and opportunities
- Ensuring the Heartland works for the UK by enabling the efficient movement of people and goods through the region and to/from international gateways, in a way which lessens its environmental impact.

7.6. Since 2021, a large number of changes have taken place:

- external influences have changed travel patterns: most notably societal changes in travel following the COVID 19 pandemic
- a changed economic environment, placing even more pressures on constrained funding envelopes
- a change in central government policies from Departments across Whitehall, not least MHCLG and DSIT/DBT
- the development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy, anticipated towards the end of 2025
- Technological advancements.

7.7. In addition, since 2021, EEH has completed a large number of technical studies, with an extensive evidence base now available to support every mode of travel in the region.

7.8. It is right that a regional transport strategy should be fluid and responsive to a changing economic and policy environment. It should be updated to reflect the breadth of technical work now complete. As such, with agreement of the Board in July 2024, EEH started work on a light touch update to the existing transport strategy.

7.9. The strategy forms an important, and complementary, document when setting out the need for investment in transport infrastructure in the EEH region. As its development is overseen by this Board, its approval will only be once all members of the EEH partnership are content with it.

7.10. In anticipation of developing an updated strategy, EEH officers have been undertaking a series of 'visioning' workshops with local authority officers to help ensure the strategy still has the right direction of travel or where it might need amending.

7.11. The visioning is intended to help 'check and challenge' that the transport strategy is still relevant in its direction and themes.

7.12. During the session the following consolidated topics were prevalent in discussions:

- Changing travel patterns
- Politics and funding
- Collaboration and strategy
- Active travel and decarbonisation
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Technological advancements

7.13. The outcomes of the visioning work are being incorporated into the drafting of the transport strategy update.

7.14. Alongside this, officers are developing an evidence base report, which will also be used to support and check and challenge the strategy.

7.15. Proposed changes to the ambition, principles and policies will be presented to this Board in the future for approval.



8. Responding to major economic opportunities or national policy decisions

- 8.1. The EEH region is continually responding to new economic opportunities or national policy decisions. In each case, the implications for the transport system will depend on the location, current performance of the network and likely demand created by the decision being made.
- 8.2. As an example, and as raised in the previous meeting of this Board, decisions on airport expansion at Luton, Heathrow and potentially Stansted will have far reaching implications – both positive and negative – for surrounding communities.
- 8.3. In the case of these expansion plans, EEH represents the wider regional interests on the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and their Surface Access Group. Working with Buckinghamshire Council, we are ensuring messages and key priorities are shared and a single consistent position is presented on behalf of the region. In the case of London Luton Airport expansion, the EEH Board provided a formal response to the expansion proposals. In support of this, EEH officers represented the region, including providing evidence to the examination in public. EEH officers are also members of the London Luton Airport Access Forum.
- 8.4. In each case, EEH tailors its approach according to the financial, economic and environmental considerations surrounding each case. Using airport expansion as an example, recent policy decisions around Heathrow will exacerbate the need for EEH to strengthen our involvement, particularly thinking about public transport access to Heathrow from neighbouring communities.
- 8.5. It is right, given the values of EEH as a locally-led partnership where our priorities and focus are set by Board Members and therefore – by design – local partners, that the way EEH responds to major economic opportunities or policy decisions is set and agreed with partners most affected by them. This will vary on a case-by-case basis but it is important that the approach being taken both is approved by relevant Board members and that the whole Board is kept informed.
- 8.6. A response from EEH could include: data and analytical support; engagement with relevant partners and government departments; preparation of written evidence to support responses; a coordination role; engaging with the NSIP/DCO/SDO process where it is appropriate to do (capturing the cross-border impact of some projects); and advocacy for investment.
- 8.7. In order to manage the range of approaches and to share learning across activities, officers will ensure the Board is kept regularly updated on work underway and progress made.

Naomi Green/Adam King
England's Economic Heartland
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