



# England's Economic Heartland Board

19 March 2026

## Item 5: Integration

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Notes the launch of the Integration Taskforce and the proposed role that this leading group of transport professionals will play in realising the EEH Integration work.**
- b) Supports the approach relating to the Universal Transport Opportunity Plan**
- c) Notes the progress being made towards a Transport Opportunity Plan at Silverstone.**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To provide the Board with an update on EEH's Integration work, notably the Integration Taskforce launch, the Universal Studios Transport Opportunity Plan (TOP), and emerging other TOPs, firstly Silverstone.

### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. The Integration taskforce was successfully launched at Interchange Conference in Manchester and comprises of an external group of public and private sector experts to challenge and support EEH on the regional integration work.
- 2.2. The Bedford/ Universal Transport Opportunity Plan is progressing with the establishment of a working group of transport officers from Bedford, Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton.
- 2.3. The DfT Sustainable Transport Group for Universal is being established which will be chaired by EEH.
- 2.4. Work is also progressing to explore what a Transport Opportunity Plan in Silverstone could look like – coinciding with the timeframe for the current Silverstone 2035 programme.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. There is considerable transformative development in the EEH region: including major new attractions such as Universal Studios and Puy du Fou; housing and economic growth; four potential new towns; the delivery of East West Rail; and airport expansion.



- 3.2. These provides the opportunity for the region testbed for the DfT's upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy.
- 3.3. Communities must benefit from the opportunities the above development provides, including through a truly integrated transport network: providing seamless, multimodal, door-to-door journeys.
- 3.4. Working with local authorities and DfT, EEH's work aims to realise a transport system which is more than the sum of its individual parts: maximising the benefits of existing and new infrastructure; making public transport and active travel more attractive; reducing the impact of development on existing residents; improving access to jobs, education and healthcare.
- 3.5. EEH's integration work is supported by an Integration Taskforce of national experts, and the delivery of transport opportunity plans for specific places.

#### **4. Launch of the Integration Taskforce**

- 4.1. EEH launched the integration taskforce on the 3 March at the Interchange Conference in Manchester.
- 4.2. The Integration Taskforce is a panel of nationally renowned experts across the public and private sectors, who will explore innovative approaches to transport integration and support and evaluate EEH's integration work. The Taskforce will inform and provide further advice in support of this Board's and Government's decision making in the region.
- 4.3. EEH has great ambition for the taskforce in pulling together the best practice from across the country and abroad and advising on how these can be applied to deliver integrated transport across the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor.
- 4.4. The Taskforce will be chaired by Professor Stephen Joseph, a visiting professor at the University of Hertfordshire and chief executive of the Campaign for Better Transport from 1988 to 2018. Stephen was awarded an OBE in 1996 for services to transport and the environment.
- 4.5. It is likely more members will be announced soon. They currently include:
  - Danny Williams, CEO of Active Travel England and Director of the Integrated National Transport Strategy
  - Jessica Matthew, Director, Local Transport Planning and Housing at the Department for Transport
  - Erika Lewis, CEO at Connected Places Catapult
  - Ben Plowden, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport
  - Rachel Skinner CBE, previous President of the Institution of Civil Engineers
  - Thomas Ableman, Founder of Freewheeling and leader of the mini-Switzerland project
  - David Milner, Managing Director of Create Streets
  - Nicola Kane, Chair of the Transport Planning Society
  - Pete Dyson, Behavioural Science Expert

#### **Governance of the programme**

- 4.6. The wider EEH Integration work will continue to be governed by the EEH Board and key updates from the Transport Opportunity Plan work will be shared through future integration board papers.
- 4.7. EEH is targeting key actions from the Integration Taskforce meetings to feed into the EEH Board for decision and endorsement.
- 4.8. The Universal Transport Opportunity plan will also be reported into the DfT Sustainable Transport Board that is outlined later in this paper.



## **5. Transport Opportunity Plans (TOP)**

- 5.1. Place-specific transport opportunity plans (TOPs) will identify and develop interventions designed to increase connectivity and support multimodal journeys across the region.
- 5.2. They are aligned to achieving the nine opportunity statements identified in the Phase One Integration Report<sup>1</sup>. TOPs will be undertaken in collaboration with local authorities, key stakeholders and bus and rail operators.
- 5.3. EEH is currently progressing a Transport Opportunity Plan for the Universal United Kingdom Resort, in development just outside Bedford.
- 5.4. TOPs are being developed and brought forward through collaboration with local authority partners and key stakeholders when there is agreement on the suitability and appropriate timing for the TOP.
- 5.5. EEH are in the early stages of assessing a potential TOP at Silverstone. This aligns with the 'Silverstone 2035' ambitions and has strong support from Buckinghamshire and West Northamptonshire Councils.
- 5.6. Heads of service of all member authorities will continue to receive briefings, as well as how potential TOPs may be considered within their areas. The first of these briefings was held in January 2026 and another is scheduled the end of this month.

## **6. Transport Opportunity Plan for Universal**

- 6.1. Universal TOP Working Group is now established with the representatives of Milton Keynes City Council, Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. Potential project themes have been shared that support the delivery of the project.
- 6.2. DfT funding is supporting an FTE post within Bedford Borough and recruitment for this is due to start imminently. This individual will be tasked with the development of the Transport Opportunity Plan for Universal, ensuring it reflects transport needs of the area.
- 6.3. The Universal TOP Project Plan is currently being developed and will be shared with officers from Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Bedford Councils for their agreement and review. EEH Officers will ensure progress on the Universal TOP is widely shared and reported back via this Board.
- 6.4. Officer level engagement for Universal TOP is proposed to include:
  - A specific working group for the four neighbouring authorities.
  - Broader geographic engagement to ensure the wider connectivity considerations are captured.
  - A Bus working group via the EEH Bus Operators Group.

## **7. Transport Opportunity Plan for Silverstone**

- 7.1. Silverstone, on the borders of Buckinghamshire and West Northamptonshire, is home to the world-renowned Silverstone racetrack (home to Formula One) and is a significant employment focus and enterprise zone with: two formula one teams, significant business park with research and advanced manufacturing capabilities, a college, an hotel; and other leisure focused businesses.
- 7.2. The Silverstone 2035 Board have developed an ambition to be the world's premier destination for high-performance innovation, where sport, science, engineering, technology, and leisure converge to drive a sustainable future.
- 7.3. To support ambitions, EEH are in the early stages of assessing the appropriateness of a Transport Opportunity Plan for Silverstone. This aligns with the criteria presented to the Board in December for consideration of the suitability of a TOP, including:

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<sup>1</sup> [698c6769dd1f5e516ed0903b\\_EEH Integration Phase 1 Report December 2025.pdf](#)



- Within proximity of current/ planned East West Rail station/s and would substantially benefit from improved connectivity to them (alongside, in the case of Silverstone, other non-EWR stations)
  - A major national trip attractor – new or existing
  - A major area of economic growth
- 7.4. The Transport Opportunity Plan for Silverstone will be steered by the Silverstone 2035 Project Board, which includes representatives from West Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire councils and will be developed with input from local authority officers and members of Silverstone Green Travel Plan Group.
- 7.5. The current work is focused on:
- Scoping – Currently scoping and developing the project plan.
  - High level SWOT analysis to identify current opportunities and challenges.
  - Data Deep Dive through the identification of data sources and data collection
  - Meetings with local authority representatives and Silverstone Green Travel Plan Group.

## **8. Future Integration Plan Work**

- 8.1. EEH is undertaking significant work focused on how we can achieve the Opportunity Statements that were identified in the phase one work. EEH will input its existing evidence base into the statements, while researching additional best practice.
- 8.2. It is anticipated that the first taskforce meeting will take place in May, with a summary and readout to be shared within the integration agenda item at June's in-person EEH Board meeting.
- 8.3. EEH has set up a page on its website which contains updates on the integration programme: [www.englandseconomicheartland.com/integration1](http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/integration1)

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