



England's Economic Heartland Board

18 June 2026

Item 7: Integration

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) **Notes the launch of the Integration Taskforce and receives a verbal update from the Chair of the Taskforce, Professor Stephen Joseph.**
- b) **Receives an update on the progress being made across the Transport Opportunity Plan programme and provides a steer on the proposed locations for TOPs.**
- c) **Supports the priority workstreams that are being progressed with the DfT Sustainable and Active Travel Group for the Universal United Kingdom Resort Site.**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide the Board with an update on EEH's Integration work, including: the first session of the Integration Taskforce; and progress being made on the Universal United Kingdom Resort and Silverstone Transport Opportunity Plans (TOPs).

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. The first Integration Taskforce meeting was held in May 2026. This set out the challenge and potential for achieving transport integration within the EEH region and the need to support end-to-end connectivity across key strategic sites, both existing and in the future.
- 2.2. The Bedford/Universal United Kingdom Resort TOP is progressing with the establishment of a working group of transport officers, led by Bedford Borough Council, in partnership with EEH, the Department for Transport and officers from Central Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton.
- 2.3. The DfT Sustainable Transport Group for Universal United Kingdom Resort has been established and is chaired by EEH Officers and have set out key priority areas of focus that the Board is welcomed to support. This group will also support the development of the Universal United Kingdom TOP.

2.4. Work is also progressing to develop a TOP for Silverstone to support the ambitions of the Silverstone 2035 programme.

3. Context

- 3.1. There is considerable transformative development in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor including: major new attractions such as Universal United Kingdom Resort and potential Puy du Fou; two locations in Government's New Towns programme at Milton Keynes and Tempsford; the delivery of East West Rail; London Luton airport expansion, alongside considerable Local Plan economic and housing growth. These present both opportunities and a clear imperative to improve transport integration across the region.
- 3.2. Integration is being delivered through the lens of EEH's nine Opportunity Statements, being progressed through 'Connectivity, Infrastructure, Growth and Innovation' to support the delivery a truly integrated public transport and active travel network: providing seamless, multimodal, door-to-door journeys.
- 3.3. Working with local authorities, DfT and other key stakeholders, 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 active travel and public transport more attractive and more effective; reducing the impact of development on existing residents; and through this creating better outcomes for residents, improving quality of life through better access to jobs, education, leisure and healthcare opportunities.
- 3.4. EEH's integration work is supported by an Integration Taskforce of national experts; the first session of the Taskforce was held in May 2026.
- 3.5. A programme of TOPs has been identified as ways to deliver integration to specific strategic locations across the region.
- 3.6. EEH's ambition is that, through the delivery of its integrated approach to transport, including the TOPs, the region will be a testbed for the DfT's recently published 'Better Connected' national transport strategy.

4. Integration Taskforce Feedback and Recommendations

- 4.1. The initial Integration Taskforce session was held in London on the 15 May, with attendees reviewing EEH Integration Programme's 'Opportunity Statements' under the banner of 'turning vision into action'.
- 4.2. Participants recognised that the region is at a critical point, with so many multiple major developments. The consensus was that the Oxford to Cambridge corridor can be a global leader in economic opportunity, but a fundamental shift is required in how we develop and design places to ensure the provision of transport systems that deliver accessible and sustainable communities.
- 4.3. Taskforce members discussed how people need accessibility and how this is created through integration and connectivity. Notably they highlighted how triple access planning (proximity, digital connectivity and mobility) could be a framework for delivering better accessibility across the region.
- 4.4. Key themes for the discussion looked at how the region can place greater focus on transport, growth and placemaking and considered:
 - How the region can deliver growth that enhances global competitiveness.

- How transport should support the creation of high-quality places rather than simply movement.
- How, when implemented correctly and effectively, transport systems can shift from enabling incremental improvements to delivering transformational change.

4.5. Detail of the session, including a summary of the discussion is set out in Annex 1. Professor Stephen Joseph is attending the EEH Board to provide further insight, including:

- The need to better integrate place and transport to support wider societal outcomes, ensuring that both are planned in tandem so that each reinforces the other, rather than transport being retrofitted to already agreed patterns of development
- A shift in how connectivity is understood and measured, focusing on access to key services and destinations—such as employment, education, leisure and healthcare—rather than simply how far can be travelled within a given timeframe
- The importance of coordinating activity around key transport hubs and corridors, ensuring that land use, service provision, and investment are aligned to maximise accessibility and support the role of these locations as focal points for communities and growth.

4.6. It is proposed that the July session will focus on the transport implications of a new town, such as Tempsford, with a particular emphasis on addressing strategic connectivity requirements. A summary of the session outcomes and emerging recommendations will be presented as part of a Board Paper update in September.

5. Transport Opportunity Plan (TOP) Programme

- 5.1. The TOP programme will use the outputs from the Integration Taskforce to review how integrated transport could most effectively be implemented in specific locations across the EEH region.
- 5.2. The sequencing of TOPs is dependent on a wide range of factors and, experience tells us, that these programmes are best delivered when the local conditions are right – this can be determined by a range of factors, such as a new theme park or to coincide with activity already underway within the partner authority.
- 5.3. The final sequencing of TOPs will be subject to final Board approval but early work has suggested the following potential order of commencement:
- 2026/27 – linked to wider economic opportunities: i) Universal/Bedford, ii) Marston Vale and iii) Silverstone
 - 2027/28 – linked to EWR: i) Cambourne, ii) Tempsford and iii) Milton Keynes; linked to wider economic opportunities: i) Luton and ii) wider airport connectivity (reflecting the timing of the expansion plans of Heathrow, Stansted and Luton airports).
 - 2028/29 – wider links to EWR: i) Aylesbury and Westcott ii) Bicester and wider economic opportunities iii) Stevenage.

- 5.4. Discussions with DfT colleagues have emphasised the potential for the TOPs to act as a test bed to realise the recently published 'Better Connected' strategy. Alignment of the 'Better Connected' priorities, along with the nine opportunity statements, acts as a baseline for EEH to identify proposed interventions.
- 5.5. The TOPs will also be aligned to local policy documents such as Local Plans, Local Transport Plans, Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and other key local strategies, to ensure relevant interventions are included and championed within a TOP.
- 5.6. TOPs will review existing transport provision and identify the ideal transport network in the short and medium term, acknowledging the proposed growth or forecasted development. Therefore, a core part of developing the TOP will be a "gap analysis" between the desired or necessary integrated transport network to support future growth and realise ambitions and the existing transport provision.
- 5.7. Due to timing and priorities both Universal United Kingdom Resort and Silverstone TOPs are already progressing.

6. Universal United Kingdom Resort Transport Opportunity Plan

- 6.1. The Universal United Kingdom Resort TOP is being led by Bedford Borough Council and will draw from shared learnings and actions identified through Bedford's plans for Universal United Kingdom Resort, measures outlined in the Universal Special Development Order (SDO) Transport Assessment and Travel Plan; and the DfT Sustainable and Active Travel Group (SAT).
- 6.2. The scope of TOP is to enable effective and integrated transport to and from the Universal United Kingdom Resort site, using this as a catalyst for ensuring that Bedford and the local region benefits more broadly from any transport led interventions that result.
- 6.3. Universal United Kingdom Resort TOP Working Group continues to meet regularly and includes all four authorities of Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Milton Keynes Council and Luton Borough Council and is supported by associated subgroups of Train Operators, Bus and Coach Operators and other external stakeholders (e.g. Luton Rising).
- 6.4. Engagement with subgroups continues to take place, with a Bus Operator session being held in July to understand network need and capacity of the four local authorities, building on the Transport Assessment accompanying the Universal United Kingdom Resort's Special Development Order application.
- 6.5. The DfT has established a Sustainable and Active Travel Group that will oversee the delivery of the sustainable and active travel elements associated with Universal United Kingdom Resort. This also sits within the wider UK Government governance for the site. DfT has asked EEH to chair the group.
- 6.6. The scope of the SAT group is to address the key patronage flows to and from the site across road, rail, bus, coach and active travel, for:
 - MK Central Rail Station to Universal Site
 - Stewartby to Universal Site
 - Wixams to Universal Site
 - Bedford Town Centre to Universal Site
 - Luton Airport to Universal Site
 - Luton Town and Dunstable to Universal Site (Staff considerations)
 - North and South flows (to address the impact on the road and rail network)



- 6.7. Core workstreams identified and agreed by the DfT SAT group include:
- Integrated ticketing, led by DfT
 - Active/public transport “gap analysis” and “opportunity mapping”, led by James West (EEH) and Verity Quinn (Bedford Borough Council)
 - Funding and local planning, led by EEH, Bedford Borough Council, and Central Bedfordshire Council
 - Senior level LTA engagement, led by Naomi Green (EEH)
- 6.8. The Government announcement on Universal United Kingdom Resort on the 3 June included:
- The site is to be called Universal United Kingdom Resort.
 - 80% of employees expected to come from Bedfordshire and the surrounding area.
- 6.9. £1.3bn of Government funding will support infrastructure related to the site.
- 6.10. EEH is continuing cross-departmental engagement at a Central Government level for the Universal United Kingdom Resort project and has recently engaged with Department for Culture, Media & Sport on the visitor economy engagement for the region. It is also anticipated that this will support future engagement with Department for Work & Pensions to support staff travel to and from the site.

7. Silverstone Transport Opportunity Plan

- 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, a significant business park with research and advanced manufacturing capabilities, a college, a hotel; and other leisure-focused businesses.
- 7.2. The Silverstone 2035 Board has 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 is in the early stages of developing 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:
- 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 report to the Silverstone 2035 Project Board and ultimately EEH Board. It is being steered a working group which includes representatives from West Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire Councils, and representatives from Silverstone Circuit. Due to the site’s strategic nature and considerable draw, there will also be input from Silverstone Green Travel Plan Group and Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes Councils.

James West
Project Lead
June 2026