



To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 12th March 2025

Subject: Rail Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This note provides an update for members of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on various rail items, namely: Network Rail's 5-year plan, the Coventry – Leicester – Nottingham direct rail link project and the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership's work on engaging young people and families with the rail network.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) is recommended to:
- 1) Note the contents of this report and accompanying papers.
 - 2) Include the formation of Great British Railways and proposals for once the current rail contract expire on a future agenda for Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3).

Information and Background

3 Network Rail's 5-year plan

- 3.1 This plan covers the delivery plan for Control Period 7 (CP7), which is from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029, but it only sets out the high-level headings in terms of planned maintenance programmes on the rail network. The only named scheme that we are aware of for the Coventry area is for the railway bridge on Holyhead Road, and details of the nature of those works have been requested from Network Rail. Network Rail have been invited to attend the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) to provide a briefing on the programme.

4 The Coventry – Leicester – Nottingham direct rail link project

- 4.1 Midlands Connect is making the case for a direct train service to link Coventry with Leicester and Nottingham.
- 4.2 Currently, only 3% of journeys between Coventry and Leicester are made by rail, which is far lower than what would be expected for travel between two cities of this size and distance apart. Implementing a direct rail service between these cities and

Nottingham will improve regional connectivity, passenger experience and promote growth in these areas.

- 4.3 Midlands Connect have been refreshing the Strategic Outline Business Case for improvements to the Coventry to Leicester and Nottingham rail provision. This project and Strategic Outline Business Case will go through the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) process, which will include Outline Business Case development and Network Rail Engineering Stage 2-3.
- 4.4 Midlands Connect have prepared a briefing note on the project which is contained in Appendix 1 to the briefing note. This contains information on the options that have been identified as part of the Strategic Outline Business Case and the additional infrastructure required, including a new bay platform at Coventry Rail Station.
- 4.5 There was an event on Friday 28th February 2025 at Coventry Transport Museum, attended by the City Council Leader, which celebrated the launch of the refreshed Strategic Outline Business Case

5 Heart of England Community Rail Partnership

- 5.1 The Heart of England Community Rail Partnership (CRP) is hosted by Warwickshire County Council and covers rail stations in Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull. Coventry City Council, alongside other Councils and Train Operating Companies, sit on the steering group for this partnership.
- 5.2 The purpose of Community Rail is to integrate rail stations into their communities and finding out how the railways can best socially and economically support the areas they serve. Projects delivered by the CRP can be anything from improving station environment through finding station adopters and commissioning art at stations, to school engagement, and to finding creative ways to help overcome barriers that people may have to travelling on the train.
- 5.3 All CRPs follow the four pillars of Community Rail:
 1. Providing a voice for the community
 2. Promoting sustainable healthy and accessible travel
 3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion
 4. Support social and economic development
- 5.4 The Heart of England CRP has delivered many great projects in Coventry, including, but not limited to:
- 5.5 Life Path Trust forming a station adoption group at Coventry Station, with several projects ongoing. The Life Path Trust are a charity supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people in the Coventry and Warwickshire.
 - 2 large planters and 6 smaller planters have been planted on the platforms.
 - 4 'try the train' trips have been carried out from Coventry Station to encourage confidence when using the railways. So far, the group have travelled by train to visit Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and Nuneaton stations.
 - 10 unique pieces of art produced by an artist in conjunction with the group, which was displayed in the tunnel at Coventry Station

- 5.6 White Ribbon – an artist was commissioned to work with two groups of men to produce artwork to reflect the message of White Ribbon, that men can be positive changemakers to promote a culture of equality and prevent violence against women and girls. This artwork will be on display at 8 stations across the network, including Canley and Tile Hill Stations in Coventry.
- 5.7 STEM 5 project provides Year 9 – 11 students with STEM days including visits to rail locations and rail careers events. Now in its 3rd year, Stoke Park school in Coventry is one of the 5 schools in the CRP area taking part in the project
- 5.8 Feel Good Field Trips – schools in Coventry have had the opportunity to participate in this campaign funded by Avanti West Coast. This project aims to provide 5000 school children across the country with free, enriching and educational days out across the West Coast Mainline. To date, 364 students in Coventry have taken part in these field trips. More information in Appendix 2 to the briefing note.
- 5.9 A Day Like This – the CRP worked in partnership with Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre and Highly Sprung to create a programme of workshops at Coventry Station and plan a day trip for participants. This included producing a ‘how to buy a train ticket’ guide in Arabic, rail safety sessions, a tour of Coventry Rail Station and a day trip to Mary Ardens Farm in Stratford-upon-Avon. More information on the ‘A Day Like This’ project is contained in Appendix 3 to the briefing note.
- 5.10 Careers Day at West Coventry Academy – The CRP delivered a Careers Day to 30 Year 10 students in June 2024. A range of different careers were presented and Train Driver Managers from CrossCountry came to speak to the students and show them some aptitude tests that potential drivers go through. This was followed up by a trip using the railways to get to Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

6 Health Inequalities Impact

- 6.1 The Council produced an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Transport Strategy in 2022. The purpose of the Transport Strategy is to offer a safe, sustainable, equitable and resilient transport systems, which enables our residents, visitors and businesses to thrive. This covers rail among other transport modes. Improvements and increase in rail travel will result in improved air quality, increased rates of physical activity as a part of the journey and fewer casualties from incidents on the road network.
- 6.2 Individual schemes will be subject to EIAs as appropriate by the delivery organisation.

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List of appendices:
Appendix 1 - Midlands Connect briefing note
Appendix 2 - A Day Like This report
Appendix 3 - Feel Good Field Trips