

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee
Subject: Strategic Transport Plan Update
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Sponsor: Katie Day, Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications
Meeting Date: Tuesday, 21 November 2023

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To provide an update on the development of our second Strategic Transport Plan (STP), and the revised timescale for adoption given recent government announcements

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee:
- Endorses the decision to defer the adoption of the STP (until March 2024) to enable us to work with our partners to fully consider the implications of the Network North announcement.
 - Notes the work to date to amend the document post consultation, set out at paragraph 3.6 below.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 TfN has a statutory duty to produce a STP on behalf of the North of England. Its purpose is to set out, based on robust evidence, the strategic ambitions for transport, specifically pan-regional infrastructure priorities and issues that are common to partners and where there is efficiency in tackling them regionally.
- 3.2 We had intended to bring the STP to the Board for adoption in December 2023. However, on 4 October 2023, the Government announced the cancellation of Phase 2 of High Speed 2 (HS2), from Handsacre to Manchester, and a new government policy, Network North, was published.
- 3.3 The TfN Board's position, which is reflected in the current draft of the STP, is that both Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 are required in full. TfN is also under a legal obligation to have due regard for government policy. Therefore, given the announcement on 4 October, it is necessary to assess at an officer and Board level the implications of the Network North policy on the draft STP.
- 3.4 We are confident that the STP vision, strategic ambitions and outcomes remain unchanged as a result; however, the cancellation of HS2 phase two does mean that consideration needs to be given to the strategic connections and/or capacity that could still be required. To ensure adequate time for that assessment (which is subject to a separate Board paper), and to reach an agreed position with the TfN Board, we propose approval of the STP is deferred until March 2024. This will allow the narrative for strategic rail, and underpinning evidence (in the Strategic Rail Report), to be updated to reflect any necessary changes as a result of the HS2 cancellation.
- 3.5 We have, nonetheless, continued to work at pace to finalise the STP as far as possible, as we recognise it supports local transport planning. Also, we want to ensure it is provided to the Secretary of State ahead of any spending review. Our focus has been on addressing feedback from the consultation, which took place between May and August 2023, receiving a total of 648 responses (reduced from 649 following further analysis post September Board). The consultation found

that while some areas of the STP required amendment/adjustment, overall the STP vision and strategic ambitions were accepted.

3.6 Following steers from TfN Board in September 2023, officers have been working to revise the document, including:

- **Strengthening the vision** by including specific references to affordability and the need to support mode shift.
- **Amending the headline metrics** for rail freight right share and vision zero to be more ambitious.
- **Better articulating that the environmental benefits we seek are beyond decarbonisation**, including more emphasis on biodiversity net gain, air quality and the enhancements to the built and natural environment.
- **Making a stronger case for freight**, embedding throughout the plan more of our existing evidence, including reference to the opportunities that inland waterways present and our aspirations for strategic rail freight interchanges.
- **Reviewing our narrative on international connectivity**, to ensure we are presenting a fair and balanced view (in line with our agreed policy position) in light of feedback from both environmental stakeholders and airports that is conflicting in nature.
- **Adding new text** on the affordability of transport for the user, light rail / mass transit and connected mobility.

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

4.1 TfN officers will review the potential cost implications of the deferral of the STP publication to March 2024. This will consider the impact of any changes that may be required to the STP following the assessment detailed in paragraph 3.4 above.

Resource Implications

4.2 TfN officers will review the potential resource implications of the deferral of the STP publication to March 2024. This will consider the impact of any changes that may be required to the STP following the assessment detailed in paragraph 3.4 above.

Legal Implications

4.3 The statutory obligations on TfN under the Local Transport Act 2008 (as amended by Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016) ("the Act") in preparation of the STP will be kept under review to ensure the STP is legally sound and complies with the legal requirements.

4.4 The Act (section 102I8(c)) requires an STB to have regard to "*any current national policy relating to transport that has been published by or on behalf of His Majesty's Government*". By undertaking the assessment of the new Network North policy via the draft STP, TfN is complying with its legal obligations to take in to account current national policy within the STP.

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.5 TfN's Corporate Risk Register includes a risk associated with the STP, and this has been adjusted to reflect the change in timescales and associated risks.

Environmental Implications

4.6 A full Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment was prepared to accompany the STP, supported by external expertise. These reports were also consulted upon alongside the draft STP and the findings are included in appendix A of the September 2023 Board report.

- 4.7 The ISA will document how and where consultation comments on the ISA/HRA have been addressed. This will include updated assessments where policies within the STP have been updated in response to the consultation. The revised ISA report, will be brought back to TfN Board alongside the final STP for approval.

Equality and Diversity

- 4.8 To accompany the STP, we have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the wider Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA), and where possible the findings of these were addressed in the consultation draft.

In addition, TfN's Transport Related Social Exclusion workstream will allow TfN and its partners to better understand the distribution and causes of TRSE in the North and forms an important part of the evidence base for the STP.

Consultations

- 4.9 TfN has followed the relevant statutory procedural requirements, well established legal requirements and government guidance in relation to the consultation process on the draft STP.

TfN has subsequently reviewed all consultation responses received and have updated the STP accordingly.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 TfN Strategic Transport Plan Consultation Outcomes, September 2023 Board paper.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 None

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (if applicable)

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

a) STP	Strategic Transport Plan
b) HS2	High Speed 2
c) ISA	Integrated Sustainability Appraisal
d) HRA	Habitats Regulation Assessment
e) TRSE	Transport Related Social Exclusion