

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources Committee
DATE	6 May 2014
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Invitation to join the East Coast Mainline Authorities
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/14/118
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report advises the Committee of an invitation to join a grouping of Local Authorities called the East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA), which has been established for Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships located along this cross border rail line and franchise to develop a business case to highlight the need for further investment along this strategic rail corridor.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Members:

- a) Agree that the current arrangements in place as detailed in the report are proving successful and are an efficient and effective use of available resource;
- b) Subject to the above, decline the invitation to Aberdeen City to individually join the ECMA and contribute to the business case at a cost of £4,400; and
- c) Instruct the appropriate officers to continue to update Members on future progress and outcomes on rail matters as they affect Aberdeen via reports to the Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. Should Members decide to accept this invitation to become an individual member of the ECMA, a budget will require to be identified as none currently exists. This would require to cover the proportionate

contribution to the business case and any related expenses associated with travel/overnight accommodation.

There are no implications for PBB options.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications as a direct result of this report.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The East Coast Mainline franchise links London Kings Cross with Aberdeen, Inverness and Glasgow via Edinburgh and for Aberdeen is considered one of the key surface external links for passengers to Edinburgh, London, and major English towns and cities along this corridor. The East Coast Mainline rail track however runs between London and Edinburgh and is the responsibility of the Department for Transport (DfT). The track from Edinburgh to Aberdeen is part of the Scotrail rail tracks and is the responsibility of the Scottish Government.
- 5.2 The rail franchise, from London to Aberdeen, is being re-tendered by the DfT with a view to a new franchisee running services commencing in early 2015. The successful tenderer will be required to offer higher levels of investment than in the past, step up competition, provide services to new destinations and deliver an innovative strategy. This new franchise will run for up to 11 years from February 2015 and is expected to maximise long term economic value. The promotion of HS2 (high speed rail from London potentially ultimately to Glasgow/Edinburgh) has also been based on increasing strategic rail capacity and freeing up other corridors, such the east coast, to develop further.
- 5.3 Those areas located along the East Coast Mainline, headed by the City of York Council, recognise the key transport connections and future opportunities that could arise as a result of this new franchise, and the East Coast Mainline Authorities has recently been established, to explore such opportunities and build the business case for future investment along this route.
- 5.4 Although much of the route is located within England with the East Coast rail line terminating at Edinburgh, the service runs fully through to Aberdeen on Scottish managed rail tracks and therefore travels through a number of Scottish local authorities and Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) areas. The Regional Transport Partnerships were keen to ensure that although the ECMA business case for upgrading the track would be most concerned with improvements to track in England, the importance of the services running north of Edinburgh should not be forgotten. They were also keen that opportunities for increased connectivity between Scottish destinations north of Edinburgh and English destinations, particularly with HS2 being

developed, should be considered as part of the deliberations on effectiveness of the line. The RTPs have agreed that given their peripherality to the East Coast Mainline itself (rather than the franchise) it would be appropriate to have a joint membership of the ECMA. Consequently Nestrans has a joint membership along with Sestran, Tactran and Hitrans. Nestrans has paid £1,100 reflecting a quarter share of the membership costs which contribute towards the overall cost of the business case commissioned by the ECMA.

- 5.4 The RTPs agreed that Frank Roach from Hitrans would represent their membership and, along with Chris Day from Edinburgh City Council, he has attended ECMA technical meetings. Nestrans also arranged an event in Aberdeen where the ECMA business case consultants presented to an audience of MPs, MSPs, Councillors and stakeholders. This meeting was the best attended of the meetings along the franchise route that the consultants presented to and it permitted our region to show the importance attached to this route. The draft business case includes the following key message:

“Better journey times are needed from the north of Scotland to Edinburgh and London, along with all passenger trains being of a consistent quality. The direct East Coast services on these routes need to be kept to ensure greater connectivity with economies south of Edinburgh.”

- 5.5 Aberdeen City Council actively supports Nestrans and the delivery of the recently refreshed Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). This Strategy includes measures to protect existing external connections, including by rail, and to ensure the case is made for further improvements, which together with other elements of the strategy, seek to improve the economic strength of the City and wider Region. Revenue support, in the region of £122,000, is granted to Nestrans by the City Council to enable the further development and delivery of the RTS. Progress on the delivery of the RTS is routinely reported to the Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee.
- 5.6 Aberdeen City Council has received an invitation to join the ECMA as an individual member and contribute accordingly to the ECMA business case, at a cost of £4,400. Given that appropriate and to date successful representation on this group by Nestrans already exists, to accept this further membership/invitation to contribute to the business case at an additional cost to that already paid by Nestrans, as well as travel and accommodation expenses for an additional person to attend each meeting, could be considered paying twice for no discernible additional benefit. Consideration should also be given to the fact that Aberdeen is well beyond the East Coast Mainline itself and prime consideration to date has been to ensure that the franchise services for the north of Scotland are fully considered in any business case for upgrades further south. There is no budget allocation for such a membership/contribution and possible related expenses.

5.7 It is therefore recommended that Members:

- a) Agree that the current arrangements in place as detailed in the report are proving successful and are an efficient and effective use of available resource;
- b) Subject to the above, decline the invitation to Aberdeen City to individually join the ECMA and contribute to the business case at a cost of £4,400; and
- c) Instruct the appropriate officers to continue to update Members on future progress and outcomes on rail matters as they affect Aberdeen via reports to future Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committees.

6. IMPACT

The contents of this report link to the Community Plan vision of creating a *sustainable City with an integrated transport system that is accessible to all*.

The contents of this report also refer to the delivery of the Smarter Mobility aims of Aberdeen – The Smarter City: *We will develop, maintain and promote road, rail, ferry and air links from the city to the UK and the rest of the world. We will encourage cycling and walking, and We will provide and promote a sustainable transport system, including cycling, which reduces our carbon emissions*.

Reference can also be made to delivery of the 5 year Corporate Business Plan, in particular the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Directorate's aims to *Support the delivery of a fully integrated transport network*.

An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has not been undertaken on this report as the contents and recommendations will not differentially impact on people with protected characteristics.

This report is unlikely to be of interest to the public.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There are no significant risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

none

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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