

Cabinet Member Report to County Council

15 September 2016

Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Finch Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
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1. An update on the launch of the bridges consultation

The first round consultation for the Upper Orwell Crossings was launched on the 1 July 2016 with the aim of raising awareness of the project, its benefits and provide an opportunity to express views and concerns. The consultation has been very well received. The project website has received more than 7,000 views and we have engaged with more than 1800 people through 14 planned events. 90% of those who have responded to the consultation believe the most important benefit of the project is the reduction in congestion and journey times through the town; also recognising the importance of the catalyst effect the project would have on regeneration in the town. The potential impact of the visual appearance of the bridges was a key factor in future support for the project; this is being addressed by the recently launched RIBA competition for an architectural team to work with our consultants on the final designs. Naturally any significant infrastructure project has impacts as well as benefits; the project team have used the consultation as an opportunity to meet with those communities that may be affected and establish contacts to enable ongoing discussions and consultation with them as key stakeholder groups.

This first round of consultation has been an excellent start to the next phase of the project.

For further information please contact: Suzanne Buck; Email: Suzanne.buck@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 260443.

2. Park and Ride

The Ipswich Park and Ride service is an important part of the town's transport infrastructure, providing a valued service to commuters, visitors and shoppers, helping to reduce traffic congestion and adding to the creditability of Ipswich as a vibrant town. However, as the current service is subsidised by the tax payer with the County Council historically paying £700,000 pa, I have challenged my officers to find a way to make the service self-funding.

The Cabinet agreed outline proposals for the services and sites on 12 July, which included amendments suggested by the Scrutiny Committee. The amendments clarified that notice will not be served on the existing contract until an agreement has been reached with the two bus operators which will include a timetable for infrastructure improvements and if no viable alternative services could be provided, any proposal to close the park and ride would be consulted upon and then referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Officers are continuing to negotiate with the operators and consider the feasibility of the suggested bus service and infrastructure changes. Further work on possible uses for the sites to make them self-financing has been commissioned.

For further information please contact: Dr Belinda Godbold; Email: belinda.godbold@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264303.

3. Connecting Communities

We are now two months into the new contracts and very pleased to report overall success with the bedding in of the Connecting Communities transport services. Each of the seven contractors are now assessing journey patterns with a view to developing multi occupancy bookings, and maximise vehicle seating in order to accommodate more passengers.

An evident theme across the county is a need for more volunteers, so we are now developing a business case to support a recruitment campaign for all Community Transport services, to include Good Neighbour Schemes. This will enable the contractors to develop all of their transport services, whilst working in partnership with local community initiatives where referrals may be appropriate.

Good news stories are coming in to all Districts; examples include a Waveney customer pleased with achieving journeys six days a week, a new Babergh customer really pleased with travelling twice a week and a St Edmundsbury customer wrote a thank you letter to all the drivers for their care and also the community bus, saying everyone has been so helpful and quite charming. The Ipswich and Mid Suffolk operator has so many compliments they are now keeping a 'Happy Book' in the office to record them all.

Journey data will be available at the end of September that will allow accurate comparison with the previous years, although to date no significant shift has been highlighted.

For further information please contact: Dr Belinda Godbold Email: belinda.godbold@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264303.

4. East Anglian Rail Franchise

Abellio Greater Anglia has been awarded a 9-year rail franchise to run passenger rail services in East Anglia. The new rail franchise comes with £1.4bn investment, with £1bn investment in 1,040 new carriages - 660 will be built by

Bombardier in Derby, and 383 trains are being built by Stadler, which will replace the current intercity fleet and the regional trains. The entire fleet of new trains are expected to filter into service within the first four years of the rail franchise. In the meantime, Abellio will continue with the current refurbishment of trains. By 2021, 32,000 more seats and 1,144 additional services will be provided across the East Anglia network, including an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough passenger rail service. Investment will also be made to introduce new ticket options from 2017 (smart ticketing by 2019), and provide free wifi on all trains and in stations. There is also a commitment for 4 services between Norwich and London Liverpool Street in 90 minutes and 2 services between Ipswich and London Liverpool Street in 60 minutes.

For further information please contact: Graeme Mateer; Email: Graeme.Mateer@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264451.

5. Anglia Level Crossing Reduction Strategy (TWA0)

BACKGROUND

Network Rail is reviewing 30 level crossings (a mixture of private and public level crossings) in Suffolk on the Great Eastern Main Line and on the line between Ipswich and Cambridge. The review is being undertaken to:

- improve safety (by removing the point where people come into contact with trains);
- improve reliability of train services; and
- reduce operating and maintenance costs.

The review of the level crossings is involving extensive consultation with stakeholders and members of the public. The first of two rounds of consultation commenced in June, with workshops held at venues in Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and Ipswich. The consultation sought public opinion on a range of options for level crossings located in west, mid and central Suffolk. The consultation closed on the 23 July 2016. County Council officers have responded to the consultation by submitting a letter, which set out objections to closures and required improvements to footways (where alternative routes are acceptable) before closure can take place. Network Rail has also been asked for further information about the types/numbers of users of the level crossings.

Network Rail is holding more workshops for councillors in September to provide information about the issues raised in the first round of consultation. The workshops will also detail the level crossing reduction strategy process.

The dates for workshops are:

Monday, 5 September (10:00 – 12:00), West Suffolk House, Conference Room West, Bury St Edmunds;

Thursday, 8 September (13:00 – 15:00), Endeavour House, King Edmund Chamber, Ipswich

The second round of public consultations on the preferred option for the level crossings will begin on 15th September, 2016. Network Rail will be writing to parish, district and county councillors and landowners to notify them of the consultation. Information will also be made public through press releases, as well as being displayed at public inspection points.

Network Rail will then produce applications, under the Transport Works Act Order (TWAO), to close or downgrade the crossing or limit the type of user. The applications will be submitted to Government for final decision.

Further information about the level crossing reduction strategy is available from the Network Rail website: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/anglialevelcrossings/>

To register for the September workshops, please contact Hannah Briggs, Communications Manager for Network Rail, by e-mail: hannah.briggs@networkrail.co.uk

For further information please contact: Kerry Allen; Email: Kerry.Allen@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264429.
