

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee

Date of Committee 18 March 2009

Report Title NUCKLE Phase 1 - Nuneaton to Coventry Rail Line Upgrade

Summary To advise the Area Committee on the progress being made on NUCKLE Phase 1, the scheme to upgrade the Coventry to Nuneaton rail route and introducing improved passenger services.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No

Background Papers None.

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- *Details to be specified*

Other Committees

Local Member(s)
(With brief comments, if appropriate)

Other Elected Members

Cabinet Member
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)

Chief Executive

Legal I Marriott – agreed.

Finance

Other Chief Officers

- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION

YES (If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee – 18 March 2009

NUCKLE Phase 1 - Nuneaton to Coventry Rail Line upgrade

Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy

Recommendation

That Area Committee notes:-

1. The progress being made on developing NUCKLE Phase 1, including the provision of new stations at Coventry Arena and Bermuda Park;
2. That NUCKLE Phase 1 enjoys considerable support within the region and is identified within the Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan; and
3. Warwickshire County Council is working closely with Coventry City Council and Centro to develop and deliver NUCKLE Phase 1 as quickly as possible.

1. Background

- 1.1 The current rail service, operated by London Midland, between Coventry and Nuneaton consists of an hourly passenger service calling at Bedworth.
- 1.2 Current passenger usage on the service is quite low, which is not surprising given the poor service offer for passengers, and also the fact that the service was suspended for several months during the West Coast Main Line upgrade project.

2. The Potential for the Corridor

- 2.1 The corridor between Coventry and Nuneaton has been identified as a major growth area in the Regional Spatial Strategy and there are a number of potential locations along the route that could receive significant additional housing as part of meeting the Region's housing growth targets.
- 2.2 The North-South corridor between Coventry and Nuneaton already suffers from traffic congestion. The density of the population and the level of activity in the corridor is set to grow substantially and will create increasing demand for transport. These demands will increase car use and congestion unless there is a good quality public transport alternative.

- 2.3 In the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) the County Council has a commitment to investigate the provision of a new rail station in the Bermuda Park area of south Nuneaton. This would increase the accessibility of the rail network to the existing housing nearby, Bermuda Park Industrial Estate and a number of potential new development sites.
- 2.4 Coventry City Council has ambitious plans to redevelop the area adjacent to Coventry station (the Friargate project) and more widely throughout the rest of the city centre. Coventry City Council has already undertaken a major redevelopment scheme adjacent to the rail line in the area around the new Ricoh Arena, and further new developments are planned there. The Ricoh Arena is proving successful at attracting conferences, business meetings and major events, as well as hosting the home matches of Coventry City Football Club. Coventry City Council has, for some time, promoted the provision of a station at this location to serve the travel needs of both the Arena, the Arena Park shopping Centre and the wider area.
- 2.5 Coventry Arena is located close to the M6 motorway and therefore a station at the site would be a suitable Park and Ride station. There would be direct trains to:-
- (i) Coventry station with onward connections to London, Birmingham and Oxford.
 - (ii) Nuneaton station with onward connections to Leicester, Cambridge, Stansted Airport, and Crewe.
- 2.6 In the longer term, the Partners aspire to extend the Coventry – Nuneaton service northwards from Nuneaton towards the East Midlands and southwards from Coventry to Kenilworth, Leamington Spa and the Thames Valley.

3. NUCKLE Phase 1 – Nuneaton to Coventry Rail Line Upgrade

- 3.1 In light of the development potential of the corridor, the NUCKLE Phase 1 scheme is:-
- (i) An increase in frequency to the service;
 - (ii) A new bay platform at Coventry station;
 - (iii) A new station at Coventry Arena;
 - (iv) Extending the existing 2-Car length platforms at Bedworth station to accommodate longer trains; and
 - (v) A new station at Bermuda Park.
- 3.2 A map showing the route and proposed stations can be found at **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 Previous studies carried out for the County Council concluded that there was a strong case for the scheme. At the end of 2007, an officer level partnership was

set up with Coventry City Council and Centro to progress the proposals. As part of this, the partnership commissioned Network Rail to undertake engineering option and feasibility work.

- 3.4 The key findings of the Network Rail study were:-
- (i) Service frequencies of up to 3 trains per hour are feasible;
 - (ii) A new bay platform is required at Coventry;
 - (iii) There are two potential station sites for a station at Coventry Arena;
 - (iv) The existing 2-Car length platforms at Bedworth station can be extended;
 - (v) At Bermuda Park, there are two sites for a station that would be acceptable to Network Rail; and
 - (iv) At Nuneaton, the current station can cope with the proposed service frequencies without any additional work.
- 3.5 Network Rail estimated the cost for the various infrastructure options outlined above at between £11.6m and £26.4m depending on:-
- (i) which sites are chosen for Coventry Arena and Bermuda Park stations;
 - (ii) whether the stations on the line have 3, 4 or 6 car platforms lengths; and
 - (iii) whether the bay platform at Coventry station has one or two platforms.

4. Bermuda Park Station

- 4.1 The two potential sites for a new station at Bermuda Park are located on St. George's Way, to the north of Griff roundabout. However, the northern site is located within the 'blast zone' of a nearby industrial unit on St. George's Way. The Health and Safety Executive establishes blast zones around premises that store hazardous substances and the size of the zone is based on the nature and quantity of hazardous substances present. Whilst investigations continue, it seems likely that the existence of the blast zone precludes a station on this site. In addition, the construction of a station on the northern site is more expensive, leaving the southern site as the most likely option.

5. Demand and Business Case

- 5.1 To complement the Network Rail study which focused on engineering issues, Centro have commissioned Halcrow to undertake further assessments of passenger demands to refresh the business case work. Their preliminary work indicates that the scheme, using an update of costs, has a BCR of over 2. In very broad terms this means that for every £1 spent on the scheme there will be at least £2 of benefits.

- 5.2 Further demand work on the potential for Park and Ride at Arena is also needed and it is expected that this will further strengthen the business case for the scheme.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The scheme has been identified both within the Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan, and also the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process. It is anticipated that funding for the capital cost of the scheme will be sought through a major scheme bid later this year within the RFA process.
- 6.2 The County Council, Centro and Coventry City will need to fund development work on the project from existing funding sources prior to gaining RFA funding approval. Centro will be seeking to agree a significant development budget for this project as part of their Capital Programme in March. The County Council's contribution will be funded from an allocation in the County Council's transport studies budget.
- 6.3 The development costs will be undertaken at the risk of the Partners as government funding rules mean that only when the scheme has reached programme entry status will some of the development costs be funded.
- 6.4 There is likely to be a requirement for revenue subsidy to support the increase in service frequencies. The DfT has made it clear that any additional revenue costs arising from the scheme will need to be met locally and the work by Halcrow to update the business case should identify the level of any subsidy required. As a partner in the scheme, Centro is currently considering a commitment to fund this on-going revenue subsidy requirement.

7. Timescales

- 7.1 The development work undertaken to date has indicated that the scheme is likely to require at least a three-year design and construction period with 2012/13 the earliest date for completion. However, the standard RFA process can take three to four years for a scheme to receive final approval to proceed. This is not compatible with the quick delivery of the scheme by 2012/13 and Officers from the three Partnership Organisations together with regional bodies are currently attempting to persuade the DfT to agree a more streamlined decision-making process for the scheme.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1 The three partner organisations have formed a Programme Board to manage the project. It is intended to commission further development work on the design and engineering aspects of the scheme as well as further work on the demand as quickly as possible in order to be in a position to take advantage of RFA funding being made available should the DfT agree to streamline the decision making process.
- 8.2 A further report will be made to Area Committee to report further progress as the details of the scheme are developed.




PAUL GALLAND
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2 March 2009

Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee – 18 March 2009

NUCKLE Phase 1 - Nuneaton to Coventry Rail Line upgrade

Key

-  Nuneaton to Coventry Rail Line
-  Existing Station
-  Proposed new Station

