

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 9 MARCH 2023

CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Slough Borough Council

Item 7: Response to the APPG for South East Call for Evidence - Transport Infrastructure.

Purpose of the Paper.

1. To note the draft submission (at Appendix 1) to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the South East call for submissions, which was agreed with the Chair of BLTB.

Background.

2. On 1st February 2023, the APPG for the South East launched an inquiry into transport infrastructure. This was in recognition that as the global gateway to the UK, the South East is one of only three regions to be a net contributor to the Treasury. The Government has also frequently cited transport infrastructure as a key priority and a recent business survey highlighted that better transport connections were the second most preferred option to level up after reducing poverty. However, reducing transport-related carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 was the highest-ranked local priority.
3. The APPG was keen to hear from organisations across the region on expectations, requirements and concerns related to the Government's transport agenda. In particular they wanted to understand:
 - If existing transport infrastructure in the South East region fit for purpose;
 - How will the delivery of transport infrastructure help or enhance the government's ambitions for "Global Britain";
 - Does the non-UK (foreign) ownership of essential transport infrastructure have a bearing.
4. Berkshire LEP considered this an excellent opportunity to advocate for investment in infrastructure the Thames Valley to support the local economy. It was also agreed with the Berkshire local authorities that there would be more weight to a submission made jointly by the LEP, BLTB and all of the authorities, rather than individual responses, especially given that many of the points we wished to raise were of a pan-Berkshire nature.
5. Responses to the Call for Evidence were required by 24 February so the LEP drafted a joint submission which was agreed between the local authorities and the Chair of BLTB. In addition two meetings are being held as part of the Inquiry and we have also been invited to attend in person and present our evidence.
6. Our full written representation is attached as *Appendix 1*, with the key thread of our narrative being that improvements to transport infrastructure in our area to enhance connectivity are an essential part of transforming the Berkshire economy to ensure that it can thrive economically, maximise job creation and attract inward investment from businesses. Infrastructure deficits in our area act as a constraint on growth and investment has lagged behind growth in population and in the size of the economy. The area is held back by congestion on its major roads and digital infrastructure which has not kept up with the ambitions of our local businesses.