

Transport and Environment Board

23rd October 2020

Restoring Your Railway Fund - Update

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on bids to the Department for Transport's: Restoring Your Railway Fund

Thematic Priority

Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Recommendations

That members of the Transport and Environment Board:

- Note that Local Authorities and SCRMCAs have committed resources to support the sponsoring Members of Parliament to submit bids to the Ideas Fund for the schemes named in section 2.2.
- Agree to the re-submission of the revised unsuccessful bids in the Restore Your Railways third round, expected to be in November 2020.

1. Introduction

1.1 In early February the Government launched its Restoring Your Railways Fund (sometimes referred to as the 'Beeching Reversal Fund') and invited expressions of interest for rail re-opening schemes. This would be for a share of the initial £500m made available to develop the business cases for successful schemes.

1.2 Current situation

First Tranche Outcome

The MCA worked with local MPs and authorities to submit bids to the first round of the Ideas Fund in March 2020 for the following lines:

- Sheffield to Stocksbridge via Deepcar
- Sheffield to Chesterfield via Barrow Hill
- Barnsley to Wakefield via Royston
- Doncaster to Knottingley / Leeds via Askern

At the end of May the Department for Transport announced the first shortlist of ten schemes across England to take forward out of the sixty bids received, following assessment by a panel of experts chaired by the Rail Minister. The MCA has been successful in securing support to progress the Sheffield to Chesterfield via Barrow Hill line.

Work is now being undertaken by the MCA team, in support of the Sponsoring MP Lee Rowley and the Local Authority Partners to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the Barrow Hill Line. The aim of the project team is to submit the SOBC for Barrow Hill to the Department for Transport (DfT) before the end of the calendar year. The appropriate budget and resources are agreed and in place to achieve this.

1.3 Second Tranche

A second tranche of bids were invited by the DfT in June 2020. For the MCA the only scheme supported for this submission window was the Waverley New Station which was submitted to the Ideas Fund. DfT officials have indicated that an announcement on this is expected in the next few weeks.

A number of other submissions have also been made by local MPs or community groups to support schemes not included in the Integrated Rail Plan or endorsed by the MCA. The Transport team is monitoring the progress of these schemes but does not intend to engage in the bids or commit resources to support them at this stage.

2. Proposal and justification

2.1 Proposal

The DfT has held generic feedback webinar sessions for all unsuccessful proposals from the first tranche and provided written feedback on areas for improvement. SCR and each of the scheme MP sponsors have considered the feedback and met to develop an agreed way forward. A third round of bids is expected to be announced by the DfT for November, and it is therefore proposed to re-submit the three unsuccessful bids into that round. The position for each scheme promoted by the MCA in tranche one is summarised as follows:

- **Sheffield Victoria to Stocksbridge via Deepcar** – Miriam Cates MP, with support from the Chair of the Don Valley Railway group, is working to address the DfT feedback and are planning to resubmit in November. The key aspects to address are the implications, mainly financial, of re-opening Sheffield Victoria station. The scheme also needs to establish the impact on existing freight services and why rail is the best solution for the problems identified.
- **Barnsley to Wakefield via Royston** – Dan Jarvis MP has been working with officers at Barnsley MBC to address the feedback. BMBC have sought further advice from Network Rail on the feedback provided and are looking to address the points raised to re-submit in November. The key aspects to address are the implication for the existing services (including freight services), the re-instatement of the missing section of line and the clear justification for why rail is the solution for the problems identified. Some specialist advice is needed to establish the technical requirements and respond to the feedback on deliverability.
- **Doncaster to Knottingley / Leeds via Askern** – Ed Miliband MP and Doncaster MBC have received the feedback from DfT and are considering how to respond to the points raised. The areas of concern are similar to the Stocksbridge and Royston schemes. This includes demonstrating why rail is the best solution, the

potential socio-economic benefits and more information on the deliverability of the scheme, including interaction with existing lines and services.

2.3 At the July Transport Board, it was indicated that the Executive team would prioritise resources on the development of the Sheffield to Chesterfield via Barrow Hill scheme. It has become clear that to be able to put forward the best cases possible at this stage additional proactive support for the lead authorities is required for the schemes described in section 2.2. This additional activity will require focused consultancy support to provide the resource and expertise to resolve the comments received on the initial submissions.

2.4 Justification

The SCR Integrated Rail Plan provides a strategic basis for the development of rail schemes in Sheffield City Region. To put the MCA in a strong position to attract funding a SCR Rail Reinstatement study was commissioned in 2019. This reinstatement study provides a good starting point to take forward the submissions, with some additional technical support needed to develop a high-quality submission and respond to the comments raised.

2.5 The submission of each of the bids to the Restoring Your Railway Fund will provide the opportunity to deliver the SCR Integrated Rail Plan. There is strong support for the projects from officers and MPs to make the submissions and to continue to support the business cases for the successful schemes.

2.6 Next Steps

The next steps for the resubmission of schemes to the third round are:

- Procure external expertise to support completion of the submissions
- Prepare a project plan for each submission
- Confirm with DfT the deadline for submissions
- Undertake work to submit bids by the DfT deadline.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

3.1 Do more: There were a number of submissions made by sponsoring MPs and community groups which the MCA is not proactively engaged with or supporting. The MCA could provide support to these bids. This option has been rejected as the resources have been prioritised to schemes which align with the SCR Integrated Rail Plan.

3.2 Do less: To date the position of the MCA has been to prioritise the Barrow Hill scheme and provide advice only to local authority partners on the unsuccessful schemes. This option has been rejected as partners have identified that additional support is needed if robust submissions are to be made to the third round in time. If the support is not provided there is a risk of failure to submit bids, or bids not resolving the issues raised from the first tranche.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The technical support needed will be resourced from existing budgets.

4.2 Legal

The recommendation of this paper does not have Legal implications.

4.3 Risk Management

The recommendation of this paper is low risk and describes an established Government funding approach.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

The recommendation of this paper does not have an equality, diversity and social inclusion impact.

5. Communications

5.1 Outward communication by the MCA is not required at this stage. The sponsoring MP for each scheme is expected to issue communication if a scheme is successful. The MCA will work with the relevant MP's office to issue complementary communication. There has already been considerable media interest in the four bids and they have attracted significant coverage already. The sponsoring MPs have also done their own publicity.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: n/a