

Historical Railways Estate (HRE) Stakeholder Advisory Forum

Date:	08 October 2021	Time: 10:00 – 12:00
Location:	Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Attendees:	(DS) Duncan Smith – National Highways (Chair) (RM) Rich Marshall – National Highways (FS) Fiona Smith – National Highways (AA) Abbas Abdulla – National Highways (HR) Helene Rossiter – National Highways (ML) Mark Leonard – National Highways (XB) Xavier Brice – Sustrans (AS) Andy Savage – Railways Heritage Trust (DP) David Pemberton – Railway Paths Ltd (MM) Mark Mathews – Department for Transport (RF) Rupert Furness – Department for Transport (GB) Graeme Bickerdike – The HRE Group (AG) Ann Gill – Secretary	
Apologies:	(NC) Nick Conran – Department for Transport	

Minutes & Actions

1.	<p>Introductions & Apologies – DS, National Highways (NH)</p> <p>Forum members and attendees introduced themselves. Apologies were received from NC.</p> <p>DS opened the meeting explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to formally establish the HRE Stakeholder Advisory Forum and together agree its Terms of Reference (ToR).</p> <p>DS explained his expectations for the Forum. He wanted to ensure that all interested parties had a voice and that all views and opinions would be considered via the Forum to ensure HRE assets are appropriately managed and all opportunities are realised.</p> <p>In the interest of transparency, all meetings of the forum would be minuted and, once agreed, minutes would be made publicly available via the NH website. DS encouraged attendees to speak freely about the topics on the Agenda and not to be guarded. His hope for the Forum is that it will support NH engagement with the stakeholder community.</p> <p>DS also explained that NH have ultimate accountability for the safety of these structures that comprise the HRE but that NH wanted to make decisions cognisant of stakeholder feedback.</p>
-----------	--

	<p>DS passed to RM and HR to manage the remainder of the Forum meeting.</p> <p>RM repeated that the Forum consists of a combination of various stakeholders with an interest across the geographical boundaries of England, Scotland and Wales and that all have an equal voice.</p>
2.	<p>ToR Discussion & Agreement – RM, National Highways</p> <p>RM explained that the draft ToR (circulated in advance of the meeting) was a working document intended to set out the intent for the Forum, its frequency and the membership.</p> <p>RF said the ToR worked well for him and said that they are very clear. He queried in what capacity attendees were taking part in the meeting i.e. in a personal capacity or representing particular organisations or groups. All agreed that attendees should focus on their role as a member of the Forum rather than individual motivations.</p> <p>AS fully agreed that presence should be based on role not individual. He also remarked that he is the only Forum member who has experience in opening a Heritage Railway.</p> <p>HR provided a commitment to keep the membership under review depending on expertise required in the future.</p> <p>GB said that one of the mistakes that HRE Group made initially was being constituted in far too narrow a way and that the HRE Group is interested in not only active travel but also heritage rail and the broader social value of the estate. GB remarked that he thought the Forum was missing expertise in ecology, environment and heritage railways as well as community representation.</p> <p>RM explained that the Forum was intended to be a core group of key national stakeholders and that NH, through their HRE Team, were engaging with national heritage, environmental and ecological bodies. He also stated that it would be impractical to invite all involved such as Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), Local Authorities (Las), Parish Councils (PCs), National Park Authorities (NPAs) and other devolved administrations. However, NH would ensure relevant bodies could provide input on a case by case basis. The ToR would be amended to reflect this.</p> <p>MM noted that we need to think about the relationship between the Forum and LPAs because they are constituted democratically to oversee matters such as conversation and heritage. It was important to understand how the Forum would relate to LPAs representing the democratic local wishes of communities. He also stated that Ministers are very keen to ensure that there is engagement with LPAs and for</p>

	<p>these engagements be appropriately recorded, managed and monitored.</p> <p>HR explained that the Forum needed to maintain a level of strategic oversight whilst ensuring that, within NH, there remained a commitment that we would take into account local considerations with all relevant parties and strengthen the processes we already have in place for this. The role of the Forum will be to consider what those formal processes look like and to test that NH are incorporating the right conversations at the right time with the right people with the support of the combined expertise around the table guiding us in the right direction.</p> <p>HR concluded that the aim was to bring together the collective expertise on the Forum to have strategic conversations about the HRE to ensure NH are incorporating all views and feedback.</p> <p>FS noted that on heritage assessments NH have agreed that Historic England will undertake a range of rapid assessments on structures within the major works programme.</p> <p>GB asked for the last paragraph on the Terms of Reference to be removed.</p> <p>Action 1: HR to update the ToR with the points that had been discussed and agreed.</p>
3.	<p>Active Travel Review of the HRE Estate – Update on Progress – XB, Sustrans</p> <p>XB gave an update on the work Sustrans was doing which was funded by the Department for Transport (DfT). He confirmed that they were not doing a full review of the HRE Estate. Instead, their work will focus on reviewing priority structures that comprise NHs current major works programme. The focus of the review is to consider their potential for future active travel purposes.</p> <p>The review is a desktop assessment against the national cycle network and national datasets. The review will include the expertise of John Grimshaw, the founder of Sustrans. The review will be ready to present to the DfT /Minister in November 2021.</p> <p>In terms of methodology to test the structures there are 4 categories:</p> <p>1st –likely to be useful as part of the national cycle network. 2nd –likely to be useful for the cycling and walking implementation plan or other local networks. 3rd – might be useful for local networks but no current plans for walking and cycling but could be in the future. 4th – unlikely to be useful for walking or cycling.</p>

	<p>A one-page summary will be produced for each location and the work will conclude by early November.</p> <p>RM suggested the Forum re-convenes before Christmas to discuss results of the review.</p> <p>Action 2: Another meeting to be scheduled before Christmas to discuss the findings of the report, date to be confirmed.</p> <p>RF asked if the report would be published or made public once seen by Ministers.</p> <p>HR said she was keen that this review would be publicly available for transparency purposes and suggested it would be advisable for a future process to be considered whereby the rest of the HRE could be reviewed in a similar manner.</p> <p>MM felt that it was important that the whole HRE is put through a “body scanner” in terms of active travel opportunities but also heritage rail. Once this is done, we can identify those parts of the estate where there is no interest. For areas of genuine interest, we can build a plan on how to manage them particularly taking into safety and their potential for other uses.</p> <p>AS said that for reuse related to heritage rail it may be more a case of rebuilding closed railway lines rather than reusing.</p> <p>XB said the challenge is that the HRE was originally perceived as the “Burdensome” Estate and that there had not been sufficient historical consideration to the ongoing upkeep of these assets. Transferring assets to LAs is difficult as many do not want to take on additional liabilities.</p> <p>RM said that the landscape around the HRE has now changed, and we need to have sufficient resources to consider development or repurposing opportunities and the correct bodies looking after the right bits of estate. He remarked that a wider review of ownership and asset management is necessary.</p>
4.	<p>Outline of Background and terms/definition of the Pause – RM, National Highways</p> <p>HR presented a briefing note that outlined the terms of the pause as well as a recommendation on how to move forward.</p> <p>RM explained the intention to seek full planning permission for all major works as a default position.</p>

	<p>GB asked if ecology studies were progressing on structures where work was the subject of the pause. HR confirmed that ecological surveys were continuing as these are required whatever happens to a structure in the future be that repair, strengthening or infill.</p> <p>GB asked if planning applications will be submitted by default for all major works schemes. RM re-iterated that pursuing planning permission would be the default position unless the local planning authority advised otherwise.</p> <p>GB explained that consensus amongst HRE Group is that infilling by default is development and therefore should be subject to a planning application.</p> <p>MM explained that permitted development is a form of planning permission as defined by the Town & Country Planning Act. The Department is fully committed to engaging positively with LPAs at the right level and Ministers want these engagements fully recorded.</p> <p>GB requested a supplementary explanation in that, generally speaking, in his view, an infilling scheme is an act of development.</p> <p>MM replied that each circumstance needed to be considered separately and that LPAs take different views on different schemes. LPAs are required to interpret rules according to their local circumstances, but that NH is committed to full transparent engagement with all LPAs. A generic view on infilling is impossible as each structure, and its context, is different. MM also explained that Class Q is not the same as permitted development, it is an emergency procedure usable by the Crown for doing work in an emergency.</p> <p>Following a few remarks by GB on particular structures in the HRE, HR said that she would be able to discuss specific details on individual structures separately with him and that the Forum should focus on agreement of a process from this point forward. HR explained that it is important for the Forum to discuss the key principles and how to take them forward in a manner that we can all agree upon to ensure that any difficulties that have occurred in the past do not arise again.</p> <p>Action 3: As the general principles presented received no dissent from the Forum, HR to prepare a note of the recommendations for review by the Minister</p>
5.	<p>Sites for Consideration for action during Pause – FS, National Highways</p> <p>GB asked for it to be minuted that he had been asked by his 9 members not to pass any individual comments on the proposed schemes.</p>

XB said he could not provide a view on the structures until the Sustrans review was completed.

RM said that the intention was to highlight to the Forum the structures NH are keen to discuss with the Minister.

HR explained that there would be no work undertaken without the consent of the Minister.

Fiona Smith went through the 4 structures.

Station Road, Southfleet (Ref - END/709)

- For many years there has been a problem with the edge girder.
- The site has been developed on both sides. There is a tennis court on the one side and the other side is being used as a car park.
- There was building rubble (potential fly tipping) underneath the bridge and the edge girder is in very poor condition.
- The bridge carries a busy B-road, so a road closure for works could be problematic.
- There has been a bat survey undertaken.
- Proposed for infill.

Collinbourne Duce, Wiltshire – (Ref - AND/18)

- Abutments either side of a current public footpath.
- In a poor condition with safety risks to users of the footpath.
- Proposed for demolition.

Nr Rollright, Oxfordshire (Ref - BNK/42)

- Single abutment, the other abutment has already been removed.
- Movement has been occurring leading to safety concerns.
- Removal would open a route to a nearby Nature Reserve.
- Proposal for demolition.

Barrowlands Lane (Ref - BRP/8)

- Works planned for a few years' time, but Dorset County Council (DCC) approached NH as they want the bridge removed.
- There is a tidemark on the side of the bridge as it floods in winter.
- LA plans are to have the bridge removed to put a cycle route either side of the bridge.
- DCC want to realign the road, to raise the level and to put a much shallower slope one side for access to the cycle way.
- The works were originally planned for this FY.
- DCC want the work done this year.
- Proposed for demolition.

	<p>RM asked if anyone had any views on whether the bridge should be retained.</p> <p>RF asked if there are any views from the local stakeholders other than that the bridge should be removed? FS said that there is an individual who wants to put a heritage railway across the bridge, but he has been refused by the LPA a couple of times and the LA are keen to put the cycle path in.</p> <p>XB said that this is a good example of removing a bridge and replacing it with another structure and there will be different views locally.</p> <p>RM noted that the purpose of the discussion was to seek feedback from Members of the Forum to assist with next steps.</p> <p>AS said that this isn't one that he is was aware of in terms of heritage rail interest.</p> <p>FS said that the height of the bridge causes lots of bridge strikes.</p> <p>DP said in his opinion this wasn't a bridge that you could re-open and put a train over. It would require demolition and rebuilding should a heritage rail opportunity be forthcoming.</p> <p>MM asked where would the line of any proposed heritage train line would go.</p> <p>AS asked if the there was a business case for the heritage rail proposals.</p> <p>RM said that the next step was to take the briefing up to Ministers around next steps for these structures.</p> <p>Action 4: HR to prepare a briefing note for DfT/the Minister on these structures and recommended next steps.</p>
6.	<p>Great Musgrave – review of works – RM, National Highways</p> <p>A review undertaken by DS into the works at Great Musgrave was presented.</p> <p>GB noted that in his view the bridge had had a minor number of defects, some deep open joints, some of which had no structural significance. He said that he felt the reasons for infilling were quite bizarre. He disputed the fact that Cumbria County Council (CCC) use the route as a diversion in the event of closure of the A66. GB said that he had asked CCC for any dialogue that they had with NH about this bridge.</p>

	<p>He also remarked that within or allied to the HRE Group there are 5 Civil Engineers with a combined total of 190 years managing railway structures. Their view was that the structure, before infilling, was in generally reasonable condition. GB also stated that in practical terms they believed it was not a viable diversion route due to sharp bends on the nearby roads.</p> <p>RM explained that the infilling has been done with public safety in mind. NH have committed to reversing the infilling should viable plans be presented for a future repurposing of the structure. However, in many years no such plans have come forward. In the meantime the structure must be made safe.</p> <p>GB mentioned that previous costs of removing the infill were stated as nominal and that Baroness Vere had said that costs depended on what was done with the fill materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if it is disposed off-site the estimated cost is £30,000; • if it can be re-used for a walking path, the cost would be £10,000; • the presented paper suggests that the cost of removing the infill would be between £80,000 to £90,000 with the material retained on site, and between £100,000 to £110,000 if it was disposed of off-site. <p>GB sought clarification on the differences between these figures.</p> <p>FS said that original figures were based on an estimate on similar infill removal works undertaken by Sustrans. The later estimates are from a quote from the contractor that installed the infill at Great Musgrave.</p> <p>Further discussions were had on the costs and merits of other possible strengthening options as presented in the paper.</p> <p>MM said this matter did go the Minister who considered all the issues presented by NH and took the decision to proceed. Advice at the time was that there was no active travel possibility at the site. If it was to become a heritage railway, it would have to go over the River Eden, where there is no bridge further down the line. This had been demolished a few years ago by the army, given a risk of collapse.</p> <p>DP said that he lives 14 miles from this bridge, and knows Eden Valley Railway Trust very well so he comes with a degree of local knowledge. He remarked that he thought that reversal of infilling should only occur if a valid reason arose in the future. He did not see the point of reversing now.</p>
7.	<p>AOB & Next Meeting – Richard Marshall, National Highways</p> <p>No AOB items were discussed.</p>

	The next meeting will be in December to discuss the Review of the HRE Estate report being conducted by Sustrans. Date of this meeting to be confirmed with members.
--	---

Actions	
Action 1:	HR to update the ToR with the points that had been discussed and agreed.
Action 2:	Another meeting to be scheduled before Christmas to discuss the findings of the report, date to be confirmed.
Action 3:	As the general principles presented received no dissent from the Forum, HR to prepare a note of the recommendations for review by the Minister
Action 4:	HR to prepare a briefing note for DfT/the Minister on these structures and recommended next steps.