

Transport Forum 18/11/2024

Southampton Novotel

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Chair of the Transport Forum, Geoff French welcomed attendees to the Transport Forum event held in Southampton. Geoff acknowledged in his introduction the importance of establishing clear direction and priorities from the new government, which were still becoming clear four months after the election.

Jaimie McSorley, TfSE's Engagement Manager gave updates on TfSE noting the regional location of this meeting, and that there would still be events in London but it was important to recognise hosting across the region and encouraging local attendance where suitable.

Jaimie welcomed TfSE's new Communications and Public Affairs Manager – James Boyes who has recently started his role.

There was also a reflection on the recent Digital Forum event which invited a panel of Women in Transport to talk about how they got into their roles, challenges they had experienced and initiatives which have worked or could be explored to encourage more diversity across the sector. This session is still available to watch online.

## **Transport Strategy Refresh**

James Gleave, TfSE's Transport Strategy Manager, took the group through the Draft Transport Strategy prior to the start of the consultation next month. This included an overview of the Vision and Missions along with an outline of planned consultation activities, including the launch webinar and dedicated Transport Forum workshop which will take place in London on January 30<sup>th</sup>, and invitations will follow. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions on the presentation and key themes included:

- **Ensuring the consultation materials were inclusive and accessible.** TfSE acknowledged there was work underway to create an easy read version and a web accessible version.
- **The risk of political change as part of county council elections and therefore impact on final approval.** TfSE acknowledged this as a risk, however significant work with current Board members has been undertaken to mitigate this.
- **The weight of influence the Transport Forum will have.** TfSE confirmed plans for a dedicated session and as part of this the final consultation report will include a dedicated section to the output from that session.
- **Questions over evidence of the impact and success of current strategy.** TfSE confirmed the current Transport Strategy is referenced and tied into many Local Transport Plans from constituent local authorities. The

emergence of the new Integrated National Transport Strategy will give us further guidance of how we are aligning with government.

Keir Wilkins, TfSE's Head of Programme and Policy took the Transport Forum through the consultation exercise currently being undertaken by TfSE to explore next steps and possible powers. This included reassurance the powers sought were intended to be complimentary and not duplicative of local authority powers. Each of the four categories of potential powers were explained, and attendees were then given the chance to give their feedback on what had been proposed and what other powers could prove useful

- **General powers and powers to be a statutory consultee.** There was broad support in the room for many of these powers, most notably the power to set a statutory Transport Strategy, provide advice to the Secretary of State about the exercise of transport functions, and making proposals to government on the role of TfSE. It was however felt that some of the other powers needed more clarity before they could be given support. The room felt it was unclear exactly what was meant by the power to coordinate transport functions exercisable by different authorities. It was felt if TfSE became a statutory consultee for energy providers this would provide some useful weight, but the exact scale of involvement was not clear.
- **Railway Powers.** The room were supportive of TfSE becoming a statutory consultee on rail strategy and investment priorities, however they felt strongly that this should not also include rail operations. There was a query around how setting a rail strategy would work alongside the emergence of national strategies and GBR.
- **Highway Powers.** There was again broad support in the room for these powers, along with the need for further clarification on some of the wording. This was particularly noted when references were made to acting on behalf of local authorities.
- **Funding and Finance.** There was support for these powers, particularly if this acted as a mechanism for getting more funding for the South East.

There was consensus in the room that something not mentioned as part of the proposed powers was involvement in planning and acting as a consultee on Local Plans. It was felt the need to align land-use planning and transport planning was a key factor for consideration. Other potential areas to explore included, carbon target setting and TfSE's role in this and road pricing.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked attendees for their attendance.