Government confirms Eastern Leg of HS2

In his first major speech since his reappointment as transport secretary, Patrick McLoughlin has confirmed at an event in Leeds attended by EMC Chairman Cllr Jon Collins, along with the Chairs of D2N2 and Leicester and Leicestershire LEPs, that the full ‘Y Network’, including the Eastern Leg of HS2 will be built. This will connect with the London-West Midlands route to the east of Birmingham and then follow the M42 corridor north-east towards Derby and Nottingham. Although station locations have yet to be confirmed, Sir David Higgins, Executive Chairman of HS2 Ltd, has been very supportive of the work led by the East Midlands HS2 Strategic Board in reaching a consensus to support Toton in Broxtowe, at a site within the Nottingham conurbation close to the M1 and A52, as the location for the Hub Station serving the East Midlands. A summary document which was launched by HS2 East at the event also provides analysis of the benefits of the Eastern Leg of HS2.

Patrick McLoughlin also announced £13billion of investment in infrastructure in the north and midlands, including new trains on the East Coast Mainline, additional capacity for 44 million rail passengers, key road improvements in and around the region and a commitment to look at the feasibility of building a road tunnel under the Peak District to link Manchester and Sheffield.

In a separate initiative, a number of Chambers of Commerce, including the East Midlands Chamber (representing Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire) have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting the case for the Eastern Leg of HS2, referring to a research by KPMG in 2013 which suggested that it would deliver an additional £4.1bn of GDP output for the East Midlands, along with South and West Yorkshire.

Further information on HS2 is available from EMC’s Director of Policy & Infrastructure andrew.pritchard@emcouncils.gov.uk.

Planning & Transport (Officer Contact: andrew.pritchard@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Midlands Connect - a partnership of business bodies, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, seeking to secure enhanced funding for transport improvements in the Midlands and support business growth in the region – is undertaking a survey to gather information on how businesses in key sectors connect with markets, supply chains and collaborators.

Save the Date - Building on the success of this year’s Annual Awards Evening, RTPI East Midlands will be holding the RTPI East Midlands Regional Planning Awards 2015 on the evening of Thursday 25 February 2016 at Nottingham Contemporary, Weekday Cross, Nottingham. Details of the award categories can be found here. Nominations will open in November 2015. The event is free and open to everyone in the planning community.

Opun – the Architecture and Design Centre for the East Midlands - is offering interactive training for elected members to provide a practical overview of the importance of design and quality in achieving better places. Subject areas include: Urban design fundamentals; Highways, Streets and Connections; Housing Quality (includes case studies and an overview on Building for Life); Green and Blue infrastructure (designing within landscapes, creating landscapes and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems); Protecting and enhancing our heritage; and The value of design quality in Neighbourhood Planning. Each session will be based on a 2 hour time slot at a time to suit in your own offices, often before or after a Committee meeting. Site visits and practical exercises can be added if required (subject to cost). The sessions cost £495 + VAT, and travel expenses will be reimbursed. To find out more contact garry@opun.org.uk.
Nottingham City Council has secured £6.1 million from the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership to kick start an overhaul of Nottingham’s cycle facilities. The funding is for 2 years starting in April 2015 through to March 2017 and will be delivered in collaboration with a number of partner organisations.

Wildlife and Countryside Link, which brings together 44 voluntary organisations, has published guidelines to determine ‘high environmental value’. The definition will make it easier for local authorities and developers to appropriately prioritise brownfield sites for development while honouring the Government’s commitment to protect wildlife.

Community Issues (Officer Contact: stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk)

The Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network, the national umbrella body representing Neighbourhood Watch members across England and Wales, has just launched a new Strategic Plan outlining its ambitions over the next five years.

Economic Development, Skills & Education (Officer Contact: peter.williams@emcouncils.gov.uk)

During a visit to engineering firm Garrandale in Derby this week, the Chancellor George Osborne, set out plans for the Midlands to become Britain’s engine for growth. To develop the ‘Midlands Engine’ initiative the Chancellor announced his wish to see bids to create additional enterprise zones in towns and cities including Derby, Lincoln, Loughborough and Corby. On infrastructure, roads to be upgraded included the M1, A453 and improvements to junctions in Derby and Nottingham, as well as Midland Mainline electrification and a new station at Ilkeston, and progressing HS2 (see feature article for details on HS2). The Chancellor’s speech also contained details on education reform and an expansion of the apprenticeship programme. To achieve these reforms the Chancellor called on local leaders and communities to discuss the extent to which they would like to see powers devolved to cities and counties in areas like transport, skills, housing, health and social care, as highlighted by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill.

The Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), as well as Oxfordshire LEP, have outperformed London, Manchester and Liverpool to be named the UK’s most innovative LEPs. A report from the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) has revealed an ‘arc of innovation’ stretching from Cambridge, through the south east Midlands to Gloucestershire.

The Department for Education has announced new measures to force councils and governing bodies to actively progress the conversion of up to 1,000 schools rated ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted into academies.

DWP has confirmed that Universal Credit is now available at 15 more job centres. These include: Buxton, Glossop, Kettering and Loughborough.

Health & Social Care (Officer Contact: stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Public Health England (PHE) has published updated health profiles for 2015. The profiles, which draw together information to present a picture of health in each local area, help local government and health services to understand their communities’ needs, so that they can work to improve people’s health and reduce health inequalities. The profiles and related interactive information for the East Midlands are available here.

The Prime Minister David Cameron has announced that he will bring forward plans to double the amount of free childcare for some working parents. Under the Childcare Bill working parents will benefit from 30 hours of free childcare a week for three and four year olds. The offer will benefit 600,000 families and be worth the equivalent of £5,000 a year. The rollout is now due to commence in 2016.

More than a third of UK adults who think they are merely overweight are actually clinically obese, according to a European survey of 14,000 people. A fifth of Britons who consider themselves normal or healthy weight are also officially classified as overweight. The survey was conducted in collaboration with the European Association for the Study of Obesity. For more information see the Association for the Study of Obesity’s press release.
Climate Change & Sustainable Development (Officer Contact: mike.peverill@emcouncils.gov.uk)

The Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) has been asked by Innovate UK and the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) to form a picture of what activities may be underway locally in efforts to de-carbonise vehicle fleets. To complete the survey, which has been developed in response to a number of enquiries received from councils asking for advice on reducing the CO2 footprint of their vehicle fleets, and is aimed at local authority fleet managers and transport decision and policy makers, click here.

A company that specialises in unlocking the power of data has developed an alert system that gives a real-time picture of river levels and the potential for flooding at more than 2,400 locations across England and Wales. Shropshire-based Shoothill developed its GaugeMap with help from Innovate UK. The map is a visualisation of river levels at 2,481 Environment Agency river gauges.

Local Government Policy (Officer Contact: stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk)

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Network has published a factsheet which summarises NHS healthcare that migrants with NRPF can access in England, whether this will be chargeable, and the new Immigration Health Charge. Meanwhile, Compas, the Centre for Research at Oxford University, has published new research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, that explores the contradiction between a requirement in immigration law that excludes some families with NRPF from accessing support from the welfare state and a provision in the Children Act 1989 (Section 17) that requires local authorities to provide services to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child that is ‘in need’ and to keep families together. EMC’s lead officer on NRPF sarah.short@emcouncils.gov.uk contributed to the research; and NRPF was also an issue highlighted in EMC’s recent report on The Impact of International Migration on the East Midlands.

Lincoln City Council has won the Economic Resilience Award and Overall Impact Award in the annual Centre for Public Scrutiny’s (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Awards. ‘Lincoln against Poverty’ impressed the judging panel due to their focus on an issue of real importance to residents, their creative approach to working with others and the commitment of the councillors.

The Surveillance Camera Commissioner has launched a survey to review the operation and impact of the surveillance camera code of practice. The survey closes on 30 June 2015.

BIS has published a guide to how public enforcers can use increased powers from the Consumer Rights Act to stop breaches of consumer law. Aimed at local authority Trading Standards Services and other public enforcers, the guide provides advice on the increased range of enforcement actions that have been introduced through the 2015 Act.

EMC Events, Training & Development

Planning Masterclass: The Local Authority Role in Neighbourhood Planning - 29 September 2015. East Midlands Councils is holding a one day Planning Masterclass for local authority officers to provide advice on supporting local communities to prepare their Neighbourhood Plans. Details are available here.

Planning Masterclass: Planning our Future Town Centres – 30 October 2015. East Midlands Councils is holding a one day Planning Masterclass for local authority officers on key retail planning and town centre issues to help inform both plan-making and decision-taking at the local level. Details are available here.

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