

Ms. Valentina Licata  
Office of Rail Regulation  
One Kemble Street  
London  
WC2B 4AN

Please ask for: Rowley Osborn

T&CC/RO/JMS

19 February 2013

Dear Valentina

**Response to the Office of Rail Regulation's Review of Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5 – Staffordshire County Council**

Staffordshire County Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5. The Council has considered the Business Plan in consultation with stakeholders and has provided the following observations:

- To consider the option put forward in the West Midlands & Chilterns Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for an additional hourly service between Tamworth and Birmingham New Street with stops at Wilnecote and Water Orton. This would be reliant on improvements to track capacity at Water Orton. Option 12b in the RUS included hourly services from Birmingham New Street to Tamworth and Nuneaton. A study is currently being undertaken to understand the infrastructure requirements for an increased frequency of services to Tamworth including a turnback facility, the outcome of this is expected soon. The Council would wish to see this scheme acknowledged within the Business Plan as this will offer a significant improvement in services from Tamworth which are already overcrowded, particularly during peak hours. Any future development of services on the Tamworth line should not be in detriment to the semi-fast Cross Country services already providing half-hourly journeys between Birmingham, Tamworth, Burton-on-Trent, Derby and Nottingham, and to the calls on long-distance Cross Country services through to Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland, and through to the South and South West every two hours.
- We fully support the works associated with the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in the Stafford and Norton Bridge areas to provide for additional capacity and reduction in conflicting moves by improvements such as a flyover at Norton Bridge for services towards Stoke-on-Trent and Manchester and providing line speed improvements on the WCML in the Norton Bridge area, and also provision of enhanced freight recess facilities. These measures will reduce the potential for delays due to conflicting movements and increase the reliability of services through the area.

- The County Council welcomes the HLOS project for the electrification of the Chase Line route between Walsall and Rugeley Trent Valley. This scheme should provide for capacity improvements both towards Birmingham and improve connections from Chase Line stations through to Stafford and stations further north. Electrification of the line will also provide an alternative and diversionary route between Stafford and the West Midlands. The associated linespeed improvement works and resignalling project combined with the electrification scheme will enable faster journey times and improved connectivity to destinations further afield.
- Other key projects are mentioned for completion in CP5 which will deliver improvements to services within the county include Colwich and Rugeley resignalling enhancements and journey time improvements between Rugby and Tamworth.
- Future electrification schemes are also mentioned for consideration in future Control Periods, including the Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury line and the Derby to Birmingham line. The Council welcomes the indication of proposals for electrification on these key routes. We would also wish to see electrification of the line between Lichfield Trent Valley and Wichnor Junction to provide another key diversionary route and potential to improve connectivity to Lichfield from key destinations to the north.
- The Council would wish to see the ability to bid for Access for All funding for improvements to platform access at the key stations of Kidsgrove and Lichfield Trent Valley. We are already working in partnership with the Train Operating Companies to explore the potential for this.
- We are working with our partners through a programme of Gateway Improvements to bid for National Stations Improvement Plan (NSIP) funding at our key gateway stations to Staffordshire.
- Staffordshire is aware of the emerging projects related to the Northern Hub and schemes related to the Northern franchise which could have an impact on connectivity of services through Staffordshire. We would wish to see the provision of a direct service from Staffordshire to Manchester Airport to improve connectivity to the county from this major hub.
- All schemes mentioned must take account of emerging route and service patterns as part of High Speed 2 (HS2) Phases 1 and 2.

If you wish to discuss any of the matters further with me, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Rowley Osborn  
Transport Assessment Officer