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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FINANCE &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b> 13
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2019</b>	<b>CATEGORY:</b> <b>DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>	
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>FRANK MCARDLE</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR REOPENING THE LEICESTER TO BURTON RAILWAY LINE</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That Members approve a contribution of £5,000 to the Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line (CRIL) towards a Feasibility Study into reopening the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To seek Members' views on a request from CRIL to fund and participate in a Feasibility Study to explore the reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers.

## **3.0 Detail**

### **Background**

- 3.1 The railway line from Leicester to Burton was closed in 1964 as part of the Beeching cuts to reduce network routes and restructure the railways in Great Britain. The line is currently a freight-only line that passes through the towns of Coalville and Ashby-de-Zouch and passes close to Swadlincote.
- 3.2 At the time of closure the dominant industries along the line were coal, clay and quarrying. Today that picture has completely changed with many new businesses replacing the mines, many new housing developments being built and a growing population that mostly travels to work by car, or has limited access to public transport, due to infrastructure that is not adequate to meet the need.
- 3.3 Previous attempts to re-open the passenger line have failed. The most recent in 2016 when a DfT WebTAG assessment commissioned by Leicestershire County Council resulted in a poor Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) and that there was insufficient justification for the submission of a business case. LCC stated that no further action to re-open the passenger line will be pursued at that time.

- 3.4 In response to this and as a result of the impending arrival of HS2b and the anticipated infrastructure problems during the construction phase, continued pressure on the local road systems and the need to comply with Government environmental targets a group was formed in January 2019 to revisit and challenge the outcomes of the Aecom report, as it was felt these were not a true and fair reflection of the growth in the area, and no alternative solutions were sought for the line including the link to Leicester to improve the BCR.
- 3.5 To support and enhance the efforts of what the group has achieved to date Councillor Nick Rushton, Leader of Leicestershire County Council has contacted all local authority Leaders along the line to inform them of their involvement with CRIL, and suggested that they grant the group a sum of money to enable them to commission a fresh study into the feasibility of reopening the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers. The amounts suggested were £10,000 from each upper tier Councils and £5,000 each from District / Borough Councils.

### **Feasibility Study**

- 3.6 A Draft Brief for the Feasibility Study will be prepared by CRIL with input from the contributing local authorities through a Project Steering Group. The Brief will include the approach that CRIL intend to take for the study as the lead commissioning organisation. A timetable will be provided by CRIL for the work, including key decision points and milestones along with communication and liaison plans.
- 3.7 CRIL is currently in the process of formalising arrangements to enable the necessary financial pledges to be accounted for appropriately, and mitigate any liabilities for all contributors.
- 3.8 The objective of the Study would be to explore alternative solutions, and the potential scale for the reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers to those in the original assessment commissioned by Leicestershire County Council. To test the differing service concepts for the route between Leicester and Burton serving a number of intermediate and small stations, and secondly a strategic service which would connect with London via Lichfield and/or Derby; and to guide future investment in the implementation to reopening the line to passengers.
- 3.9 Key outputs of the Study would include: Consideration of a terminus at King Power Stadium; Wider public transport links to connect Leicester Railway Station, towns and villages along the route; an analysis of business needs and costs for each of the intermediate and small stations put forward for consideration along the line including Drakelow, Church Gresley, Moira, Ashby de la Zouch, Coalville, Ellistown and Leicester; Phasing and investment options; Exemptions; and, revenue generation to sustain services in the future. The Study would also include reasons should the reopening of the railway line is not feasible for passengers.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 A Brief for the Feasibility Study would be issued and the work overseen by a Project Steering Group led by CRIL and supported by contributing local authorities. CRIL with Leicestershire County Council backing has requested that the District Council contribute £5,000 towards the cost of the Feasibility Study. As there is no specific budget for this contribution, it would need to be funded from the General Fund Reserve. It is anticipated that the total cost of the Study will be approximately £50,000, with contributions also being made by other local authorities along the line

including North West Leicestershire, East Staffordshire, Hinckley & Bosworth, Staffordshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council.

## **5.0 Corporate Implications**

5.1 The reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers could contribute to the Corporate Plan's vision to 'make South Derbyshire a great place to live, work, and invest' and in particular to the themes of:

- Our Environment – Keeping a clean, green District for future generations
- Our People – Working with communities and meeting the future needs of the District
- Our Future – Growing our District and our skills base

5.2 The key aims include:

- Strive to make South Derbyshire District Council carbon neutral by 2030
- Enhance the appeal of Swadlincote town centre as a place to visit
- Support social mobility to ensure people have the opportunity to access skilled jobs, higher and future education
- Attract and retain skilled jobs in the District
- Influence the improvement of infrastructure to meet the demands of growth

## **6.0 Community Implications**

6.1 The reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers could contribute directly to the South Derbyshire Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy vision of 'a dynamic and caring South Derbyshire, able to seize opportunities to develop and empower successful communities, whilst respecting and enhancing the varied character and environment of our fast growing and diverse District'.

6.2 Sustainable Development is highlighted as a key theme, with the aim of achieving 'A more prosperous, better connected, increasingly resilient and competitive economy' and 'A better place to live, work and visit at the heart of The National Forest', with measures including unemployment levels in the District and spend by visitors to The National Forest.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 The NPPF indicates that local authorities through their planning policies should seek to reduce the need to travel and encourage modal shift away from the use of cars and heavy goods vehicles towards public transport, cycling, walking and rail freight. The objectives of the transport policy are to support economic growth and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.

7.2 Goals of the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan Three are to support a resilient local economy, tackle climate change, contribute to better safety, security and health, promote equality of opportunity, improve quality of life and promote a healthy natural environment. The key transport priorities and investment priorities as set out in their plan are to improve local accessibility, and achieving healthier travel habits through public transport including community rail initiatives, and long term projects that support opportunities to move freight on to rail.

7.3 South Derbyshire Local Plan deals with proposals for the amount and location of future infrastructure in ways which enhance the quality of life for everyone. This means allowing people easy and convenient access to jobs, essential day-to-day services and other services by walking, cycling, public transport and reducing the need to use the car.

7.4 South Derbyshire Local Plan sets to support and protect sustainable transport through the following policies;

- Policy S6 Sustainable Access the Council will seek the provision of new or enhanced walking, cycling, public transport and rail freight services and infrastructure and, where needs cannot be met by the aforementioned means, highway and car/lorry parking infrastructure;
- Policy INF2 Sustainable Transport Land is protected for against development that would prejudice the establishment of a new passenger railway stations at Castle Gresley, Drakelow and Stenson Fields. Development likely to impair the continuity of the Burton to Leicester railway line or otherwise compromise the potential establishment of a passenger rail service on this route will not be permitted.

7.5 The District's Economic Development Strategy 2016-2020 highlights that;

- Accommodating high levels of population will continue, with extensive areas of new housing planned. The challenge will be to facilitate the provision of many more jobs, and a range of employment opportunities that are accessible locally to a rapidly growing workforce. This will avoid worklessness or higher levels of commuting and associated congestion.
- Maximising the potential of The National Forest is a key challenge for the District in order to realise the full benefit of this unique initiative.

7.6 The reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers for South Derbyshire and the National Forest could support the economic development and growth of the District, and reduce the districts carbon footprint.

## **8.0 Background Papers**

8.1 Summary of Feasibility Study process and timescales

8.2 Notes on the proposed Feasibility Study for the reopening of the Leicester to Burton railway line to passengers