
TITLE: SOHAM STATION

Committee: Development and Transport Committee

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Author: Darren Hill, Business Development Manager

[M145]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 Update on progress with Soham Station.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are requested to;

- a) Note the contents of this report.
- b) Instruct Officers to report back to this committee following a meeting with Cambridgeshire County Council/ Department of Transport/Greater Anglia on the 26th November on any additional feasibility work required and the cost/resource implications of submitting a full business case.
- c) Feedback on the outcome of the wider timetabling study once made available.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 Members have previously instructed officers to investigate the process for reinstatement of a railway station at Soham. Initial discussions with Network Rail, rail companies and the Department for Transport have confirmed that the following separate elements will have to be progressed in parallel, if the project is to be successfully delivered:

- 1) Assessment of the engineering feasibility of constructing a station on the suggested site, to meet all industry requirements
- 2) Assessment of the operational feasibility of stopping passenger trains at the station, within the existing pattern of passenger and freight services
- 3) Assessment of whether that feasibility can be maintained through programmed or expected enhancements to those services
- 4) Assessment of what the likely demand for a rail service from Soham will be
- 5) Assessment of the business case for operating the passenger service and the station, within the parameters set for the train operator in its franchise (by the Department for Transport).

3.2 Network Rail have recently undertaken a review of the engineering feasibility study completed in April 2011. This internal review has led to a revised cost

estimate for a double platform option (unstaffed) of £6.15 million compared to the previous estimate of £4.8m. This revised cost does however, include £1.42m of contingency/uplift and risk which may not be required. Future stages of technical work (GRIP stages) will provide more accurate costs and should therefore reduce the level of contingency assumed.

Initially 3 separate options for the station including single and double platform were provided. Since the production of the engineering report Network Rail have announced that the line between Ely and Soham will be double tracked in Control Period 5 (2015-2019) as part of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton upgrade and therefore the double platform is now the only option available. A single platform option would not be built in CP4 even it could passively provide for a future two platform station as it would restrict capacity on the current single line at that point.

- 3.3 Modelling work has also been undertaken into the viability of increasing the frequency of the Ipswich to Peterborough rail service to hourly. The aim of this work was to establish whether there was likely to be a commercial case for increased frequency that would justify further Business Case development. The modelling work indicated that the costs involved in increasing the frequency (around £300,000 per annum) were likely to be less than the increase in revenue (around £320,000 per annum). A meeting was therefore held with the Department of Transport to consider whether they would consider there to be a case for the inclusion of this service upgrade in the specification for the long-term Greater Anglia franchise that is proposed to be let from 2014. The initial view expressed by DfT was that provided the income outweighed the costs, this would be possible, and it was therefore worth taking forward. CCC will submit their representations for the hourly service to be included in the GA franchise when consultation takes place.
- 3.4 A wider economic benefits of improved rail frequencies report has also been produced by Mott MacDonald and includes some analysis of the Peterborough to Ipswich service and the direct and indirect benefits that would be attributable to Soham. A copy of this report is attached in appendix 1.
- 3.5 We are still awaiting the outcome of a timetabling study which will investigate how connection times at Ely station for onward travel towards Cambridge and London might be improved. Based on current timings, the connection time at Ely would be 27 minutes, which constrains potential demand significantly, but this could be reduced by the introduction of half-hourly services from Kings Lynn or Norwich. This report was due to be completed at the end of October but has not yet been completed. If the service between Peterborough and Ipswich was increased to hourly and a 15 min interchange could be achieved at Ely, Soham could be expected to achieve approximately 400 passenger trips per day (i.e. 200 return journeys).

3.6 The current Train Operating Company (TOC) for the Ipswich to Peterborough service, and the presumed operator for a station at Soham (Greater Anglia) has also expressed some concern regarding the Soham Station Patronage Forecasts that were produced in August 2011. From the TOC perspective it is still difficult to assess the prospects for generating additional revenue to cover the additional costs of the station. There is some key information missing from the patronage report, in particular the assumed number of existing rail users from Soham who board services at other stations. It is difficult to determine what proportion of people are new business and how many will only generate “fare extensions” from Ely, Newmarket or Cambridge. Further work is required therefore to address this issue and the level of detail required will be discussed further with DfT and Greater Anglia.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Cancellation of the West Coast Franchise has led to the whole re-franchising programme being put on hold pending the outcome of reviews which are due to report at the end of the year. A number of reports and studies have now been completed for Soham Station however, and we have now reached the stage whereby we are awaiting further clarification from DfT on next steps and if any additional work is required before the submission of a full business case. Cambridgeshire County Council have confirmed recently that any additional feasibility work required for the project will need to be funded on a 50/50 basis with the District Council. A meeting is being held with CCC/DfT and Greater Anglia on the 26th November to discuss the studies already completed and the principles of how to make a financially positive business case for Soham.

4.2 The reinstatement of Soham Station has also been raised as a priority project for the District Council with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership who have offered to provide some consultancy support for the project moving forward. There may also be a possibility to bid for future capital funding pots distributed by Central Government via the LEPs including Growing Places Fund. This potentially could be match funded with other District Council funds in the future including Community Infrastructure Levy. The project has also recently been raised with Geoffrey Van Orden (MEP for the East of England) to establish any potential European Funding options.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/ EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Any additional costs for feasibility work and the financial/resource implications of submitting a full business case to DfT will be assessed following a meeting with project partners on the 26th November.

5.2 Equality Impact Assessment not yet required.

6.0 APPENDICES

Background Documents

Wider economic benefits
of Improved Rail
Frequencies- Mott
MacDonald

Location

Room FF102,
The Grange,
Ely

Contact Officer

Darren Hill
Business Development Manager
(01353) 665555
E-mail: darren.hill
[@eastcambes.gov.uk](mailto:darren.hill@eastcambes.gov.uk)