

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

1. Introductions and Apologies (Chair)

Attendees:

Cllr Mark Cargill (Chair), Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Cllr Phil King (Vice Chair), Harborough District Council
Cllr Wallace Redford, Warwickshire County Council
Cllr David Bill MBE, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Cllr Ian Picker, Rugby Borough Council
Cllr Ben Taylor, Blaby District Council
Cat Hartley, Blaby District Council
David Hudson, Environment Agency
Amanda Lawson-Smith, Gloucestershire County Council
Nicholas Dauncey, Warwickshire County Council
Mark Palfreyman, Leicestershire County Council
David Atkinson, Harborough District Council
Alice Goodall, Tewkesbury Borough Council
Paul Harris, Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Shawn Riley, Wychavon District Council
John Rowley, Cheltenham Borough Council
Kirstie Rea, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Peter Heath, Rugby Borough Council
Victoria Lazenby, National Highways
Sarah Spink, Midlands Connect

Apologies:

Cllr John Boyce – Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
Cllr Adrian Hardman – Wychavon District Council
Cllr Jim O’Boyle – Coventry City Council
Cllr Marc Bayliss – Worcestershire County Council
Cllr David Gray – Gloucestershire County Council
Adrian Hart – Warwickshire County Council
Neil Hopwood – GFirst LEP
John Seddon – Coventry City Council
Jonathan Dibble – Tewkesbury Borough Council
Karen Hanchett – Worcestershire County Council
John Richardson – Blaby District Council
Bill Cullen – Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Tracey Birkinshaw – Cheltenham Borough Council
Janna Walker – Leicestershire County Council
Andrew Pritchard – East Midlands Councils
Luke Willetts – Worcestershire LEP
Stuart Maxwell – Leicester City Council
Philip Clarke – Warwick District Council

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Cllr Cargill welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted the apologies.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising (Chair)

Cllr Cargill thanked Cllr Jill Simpson-Vince for her work on the partnership and welcomed Cllr Ian Picker who had taken on her portfolio at Rugby Borough Council.

Cllr Cargill noted that Cllr Marc Bayliss had now taken over Cllr Alan Amos' portfolio at Worcestershire County Council but was unable to attend today's meeting.

Cllr Cargill noted one outstanding items on the proposed Gigafactory. ND noted John Seddon is on leave and we would request an update at the next meeting.

3. Midlands Connect Strategic Transport Plan (Presentation from Sarah Spink)

Sarah Spink introduced herself outlining her role at Midlands Connect (MC) and gave a presentation on the Regional Transport Strategy. Midlands Connect also has a Decarbonisation strategy and rural mobility remit but is not a delivery body with statutory duties. Midlands Connect is a partnership made up of top tier authorities, but also liaises with Districts and Boroughs. Adrian Hart is heavily involved and feeds into both this Partnership and the A5 Partnership.

Within the Strategy there is still a focus on economic growth but also the Levelling Up agenda, how do we invest in the right places (Fairer) and decarbonisation/adapting to climate change.

MC has a tool which provides carbon data in each area – for example, almost ½ of Staffordshire's carbon is generated by trips which start and finish outside its area. We are working with DfT and other STBs on this to reduce the risk of duplication across the country.

MC is now being asked to help with issues such as access to rail, bus, micro-mobility, ticketing and rural mobility (the winner of the mini competition on the latter will be announced on 20th June 2022 at the conference in Melton Mowbray).

MC's view is that we still need to ensure that our most strategically important roads are fit for purpose and has reflected this accordingly in its input to the RIS3 process. It has also made Development funding available to develop business cases on the Major Road Network (MRN).

Freight is key to keep the economy moving. A new national Freight Strategy is due to be published by DfT in August.

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Looking at autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles etc – what's the roadmap for developing these? How do we improve as an STB and ensure the plan can be delivered?

Cllr Cargill asked about rural isolation and its connections with health and other issues. With such a complex MC agenda, what are the priorities?

SS – issues around rural mobility have an impact on social mobility and equity, with longer travel distances in rural areas. A care worker in Dudley can do twice as many visits per day than their equivalent in a rural area.

The 7 STBs meet every month to discuss decarbonisation and rural mobility to share ideas and learn from best practice.

Cllr Bill indicated surprise that the home counties are considered to be the Economic Heartland of the UK.

England's Economic Heartland is essentially the Oxfordshire/Cambridgeshire arc. SS then described the areas covered by the other STBs and the recent STB conference held in Birmingham at which all seven were represented.

Cllr Bill described his concerns around the implementation of proposals within Leicestershire, especially the rail line between Leicester and Birmingham. He asked if there a capital investment programme to give us confidence something is going to happen.

SS – The Government's Integrated Rail Plan has had an impact on a number of MC's rail schemes. Additional capacity in Birmingham is key to unlocking further growth of rail services across the region. There is reference to the Midlands Rail Hub in the Conservative Party manifesto. It is something MC is continuing to push quite hard for, along with Coventry-Leicester/Nottingham.

4. National Highways Update (Victoria Lazenby)

Cllr Cargill referred to a further fatality recently on the A46 between Stratford-upon-Avon and Alcester and had heard it is now the fifth most dangerous road in the UK. He also suggested that littering is an issue.

VL introduced herself as Head of Planning and Development in the Midlands Team at National Highways. The East and West Midlands now have a single Midlands-wide team.

VL gave a presentation on:

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

- Major enhancements and renewals
- RIS3 planning – route strategies now being drafted.
- Approach to Health, Safety & Well Being

VL commented that she was not familiar with the claim that the A46 is the fifth most dangerous road nationally. It isn't the highest route in the Midlands, but there are specific areas on the A46 being looked at including the M5 to Evesham section. An improvement scheme has been delivered by NH in the last few weeks (Worcestershire Bends and Junctions) similar to a scheme on the A49 in Shropshire.

NH has carried out a speed review of the corridor, which has demonstrated good compliance with 60 mph. A 50mph limit is being considered for the Sedgeberrow bypass.

Cllr Cargill asked why there has been a pause on delivering Smart Motorways. He mentioned the economic crisis, increase in costs for construction materials and scheme slippage and asked how is that going to impact the schemes we would like to see going forward?

VL stated that it will be incredibly challenging to get significant schemes in RIS3, which ultimately will be a ministerial decision. The expectation is that the list of schemes will be limited.

The pause on Smart Motorways is to allow DfT and NH to review the operational data in 2025 and determine whether a further rollout of schemes can be justified based on performance. Although there are concerns about safety of Smart Motorways, they are actually safer than other parts of the network. VL put a link in the Teams chat to the Stocktake Report.

Cllr Bill asked about the two issues he raised at the last meeting, including whether NH has reached an agreement with Tritax over the highway requirements for Hinckley SRFI? VL indicated that work is ongoing and not concluded yet.

Cllr Bill shared his concerns around the number of incidents occurring between M1 20 and 21a, where delays can be 4+ hours. Is there any mitigation?

VL indicated that there were problems with the bridge at Leicester Forest East and people taking their own life. Samaritans signs have been put up and discussions are taking place to see if an engineering intervention is possible at the bridge.

M1 Leicester Western Access Study – This is a RIS3 pipeline scheme which is being developed for consideration in RIS3 or beyond. Work is ongoing and no key recommendations have been made yet. We won't know if it is going forward to the next stage of development until RIS3 is announced in 2024.

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Cllr Bill referred to the low railway overbridge on the A5. Leicestershire County Council has recommended refusal in its comments on the planning application at Padge Hall Farm on the A5. He hopes RBC will be minded to refuse the application.

VL indicated that she will have to check what the position of National Highways is regarding the Padge Hall Farm site. The LPA does have a route through DfT if it disagrees with National Highways' recommendation on the application. She also promised to investigate the status of the low bridge.

Cllr King suggested that whilst propulsion systems may change the UK is still going to need roads. What are the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for making roads cleaner and greener? The SRN is festooned with litter including blown out tyres and traffic cones. Whatever cleaning schedules are being adopted don't appear to be effective. He asked what plans National Highways have got to encourage greener travel?

National Highways has developed a Net Zero Plan, a presentation on which can be given at a future meeting (a link to the Plan was put in the Teams chat). Recent work on the A46 Warwick Bypass included a huge amount of asphalt recycling. There is a current biodiversity target of aiming for no net loss, with a likely move towards a very challenging net gain target in RIS3. Responsibility for litter-picking on the A46 rests with District/Borough Council, not National Highways. We do however try to coordinate activity with Councils to secure access when works are being undertaken on the network by contractors.

Cllr Cargill asked if Councils are given a schedule.

VL responded by stating that the frequency of litter picking is determined locally by Councils. NH will offer access to them for litter picking when doing activities such as drain cleaning works.

5. Midlands Connect Update (Sarah Spink)

SS put a link in the Teams chat to the forthcoming Rural conference in the chat and the A46 conference.

She talked about the latter which is due to be held in Coventry with a range of guest speakers with an interest in the corridor. The purpose of the conference is to raise the profile and importance of the A46 at both a local and national level. There can be a plan if we all work together.

SS indicated that Midlands Connect have fed the Partnership's priorities into their work with National Highways on the RIS3 programme. The A46 features quite prominently in the priority areas for investment across the Midlands.

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

SS gave an update on MRN1 schemes and preparation for MRN2 post-2025.

Cllr King asked whether MRN schemes are one per area, or has this happened by chance? SS referred to the initial sift of MRN schemes and how quickly these schemes could be delivered. This process yielded 7 MRN and 4 LLM schemes across the region. Since then, a few have dropped out of the programme. MC are now looking at one per authority for scheme development in advance of MRN2.

6. Garden Town/Garden Village and Growth Update (LPA reps)

(a) Tewkesbury Borough Council (Alice Goodall)

AG introduced herself as the Place Development Manager working with Jonathan Dibble. She reported that there is a Judicial Review (JR) of the Ashchurch Bridge. Work on the Garden Town is progressing as far as it can until the JR is concluded.

A collaboration agreement is being developed to prepare outline applications with landowners.

The Garden Town Sustainability Strategy final report is still awaited, so Jonathan Dibble will confirm in due course if a presentation can come to the next meeting on this.

(b) Stratford-on-Avon District Council (Paul Harris)

The first phase of the Long Marston Airfield site is under construction. A possible Phase 1B can be released in advance of a relief road, which could be as many as 500 houses until a major intervention is required (SWRR or something else). We are still waiting for feedback from DfT on the Restoring Your Railways Outline Business Case to reinstate the line between Stratford-upon-Avon and Honeybourne.

WCC/SDC and Homes England Study – PH reported that consultants Vectos are looking at ways in which the new settlement can be made more self-contained. Whether that will conclude a road is still needed is to be confirmed. Recent changes in travel habits during and following the pandemic may contribute to less demand for trips. The study is due to be completed in July 2022.

(c) Blaby District Council (Cat Hartley)

CH set out the potential for a new Garden Village at Whetstone Pastures adjacent to the M1. This is being explored through the Local Plan process, and an in-depth technical assessment is underway. The third round of Garden Village funding which was successfully obtained is being utilised to secure the necessary expertise and resource to develop the proposal.

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022

Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Minutes

The site promoters have undertaken a consultation on the vision for the Garden Village, the agreed principles from which have been taken forward into the development of a Masterplan. Homes England are heavily involved in the project.

Junction M1 20a – Strategic transport evidence work has begun with Leicestershire County Council and National Highways to progress a business case for a new junction on the M1 close to where the A426 crosses it. Funding sources for this will be key and all options need to be identified. This will be a large and complex project, so there are no guarantees at present that the junction can be delivered.

(d) Other emerging strategic development opportunities (All LPAs)

None reported.

7. A46 Action Plan/A46 Corridor Local Plan and SEP Update (Nick Dauncey)

ND noted that a slightly revised version of the A46 Action Plan had been circulated by AH to incorporate updates received from National Highways on M6 Junctions 2-4 Smart Motorways, A46/B4082 Walsgrave and A46/A428 Binley.

ND commented that the A46 Corridor Local Plan and SEP Update had also been circulated by AH with the meeting papers and included an update on the Stratford-on-Avon District Development Plan 2011-2031.

Both papers were noted.

8. Lobbying, Communications and MP Engagement (Chair)

Cllr Cargill noted that the Partnership continues to work closely with Midlands Connect, and that the relationship is beginning to bear fruit. He suggested that in advance of the Party Conferences in the Autumn and the next Ministerial decision points on RIS3 in 2023, we should produce a briefing pack for MPs and other partners containing the schemes we want to prioritise and why they are critical to the corridor. He has asked AH to lead on producing a first draft of this, working closely with SS **[ACTION: AH/SS]**.

Cllr Cargill noted that he and Cllr King would be attending the Midlands Connect A46 conference next week.

PH mentioned potential quick win safety improvements on the A46 between Stratford-upon-Avon and Alcester, such as the Binton Crossroads, and that it is not necessarily always about big ticket items.

Cllr Cargill agreed and referred to junctions such as Binton and Billesley which cause serious delays and/or suffer from a poor casualty record.

A46 Member Partnership, 08/06/2022
Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams
Minutes

9. Future Items (Chair)

Cllr Cargill noted the following future items for consideration by the Partnership:

- Tewkesbury Garden Town Sustainability Strategy
- National Highways Net Zero Plan
- Environment Agency – River Severn Partnership
- Jaguar Land Rover

The Chair asked that if there are any other ideas, please send these through to AH.

10. AOB

None.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 5th October 2022, 10.30-12.30, MS Teams