

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group

150 Edinburgh Avenue ■ Slough

Berkshire ■ SL1 4SS

Tel: +44 (0)1753 870500

Fax: +44 (0)1753 870501

Executive Assistant: Madhu Hafiz: +44 (0)1753 870582

Email: [chiefexec@tvchamber.co.uk](mailto:chiefexec@tvchamber.co.uk)

[www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk](http://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk)

19<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Sent via email to: [westernraillinktoheathrow@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:westernraillinktoheathrow@networkrail.co.uk)

To whom it may concern,

### **IMPROVING RAIL LINKS TO HEATHROW FROM THE WEST AND BEYOND: Public Consultation**

Network Rail opened the above consultation on 11 May 2018. We welcome the opportunity to comment and prior to the consultation closing, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018, having consulted our membership we provide the following response.

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) Group:

1. Strongly supports proposals to improve the access to London Heathrow (LHR) from the west.
2. Identifies as one of our four main Business Manifesto (2018) priorities, to help 'provide a business solution to securing the commitment, funding and delivery of the Western Rail Link to London Heathrow (WRLtH)'.
3. Whilst we have no explicit preference for either Option A or Option B (possible routes for the final section of the tunnel, closest to Heathrow), we do emphasise the need for the strongest possible consideration and commitment to ensure all environmental impact is mitigated, and indeed, environmental *gain* results from the option chosen and wider WRLtH scheme.
4. Supports proposals for the expansion of LHR (also a Business Manifesto priority) and the need to deliver WRLtH in conjunction with securing the delivery of the 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at the airport.

By way of background to these comments:

#### **Business Manifesto**

- The TVCC consulted heavily, with its membership, in developing its Business Manifesto (2018). The importance of delivering the Western Link – and expansion of LHR – were identified as two of the four main priorities the Chamber's membership indicated we should focus on and champion to ensure the future competitiveness of the Thames Valley region.

#### **Business and Economic Case**

- The business case and economic case for the WRLtH were made back in 2011 based on the needs of a two-runway airport. The scheme, to provide a rail tunnel from LHR T5 to the GWR main line, was adopted by government in July 2012. It was programmed for delivery in Network Rail's CP6. The Link was endorsed by the Davis Commission as the solution to western rail access and the Davis report presumes completion to serve a third runway. The Link has extensive support from business and from local and national politicians across the areas benefitting including the Welsh Assembly.
- We understand that the cost of the Western Link, if delivered by Network Rail, will pay for itself from fare income. Based on a two-runway airport the benefits were estimated to be:
  - £800m additional economic activity.
  - £1.5bn savings to business.
  - 42,000 jobs for the Thames Valley alone.

- Up to a 70% reduction in journey time for the Thames Valley, the south, southwest, south Wales and Midlands bringing 20% of the UK population within one interchange of LHR. This includes bringing towns like Swindon within the 'magic one hour' from LHR.
- Reduction of 5,100 tonnes CO2 emissions per annum (your consultation indicates this is equivalent to around 30m road miles per year.
- Reduction of 113m car km's.
- As the UK's only hub airport, and the UK's busiest port by value, improving western access to LHR is key to the UK's economy and its future economic prosperity. LHR is a major driver of Foreign Direct Investment into the UK. Informed estimates indicate that around 70% of foreign-owned businesses establishing in the UK locate within 60 minutes of LHR<sup>1</sup>.
- The success of the Thames Valley, one of the most productive, economically successful sub-regions in the UK, is, in part, driven by having a highly efficient infrastructure network. The inter-connectivity between the regions infrastructure networks (rail, road and air) - notably the WRLtH – is very welcome. We advocate that WRLtH will play a significant part in helping secure the continued success, and sustaining the high levels of investment required, to maintain UK plc's position as one of the world's most economically prosperous countries.
- Maintaining safe, effective and efficient mobility across the Thames Valley is vital to the whole economy, social and environmental well-being of the sub-region. Proposals that contribute to easing congestion on our roads (including the M4, M3, M40 and M25) and improve connectivity to Heathrow are welcome.

#### About the Thames Valley Chamber

The TVCC is one of the largest accredited Chambers within the United Kingdom and the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for the Thames Valley region. The Chamber is a proven centre of excellence for trade and inward investment services. Representing over 4,000 companies in membership (including Microsoft, Vodafone, Honda and Bayer), with an economy estimated in size to be more than £83,848m (2015), it is home to over 115,000 businesses, including 11 of the world's top 15 tech companies; the No.1 University in the world (Oxford); the fastest growing city (Reading) in the UK (EY); the two highest performing cities (Oxford and Reading) according to PwC; the second largest trading city in the UK (Slough) and the most productive city per capita (Slough) (Centre for Cities). In addition, the Thames Valley Chamber credits a range of impressive statistics:

- 295,000 combined number of staff employed by members.
- 5000+ number of active trade customers.
- Over £2.3 billion – the value of international trade enabled.
- 68,000 – the number of trade shipments by the end of September 2017.
- Average 150 new trade customers each year.
- 172 countries trading with our customers.
- 83 sectors represented by members and international trade customers.
- Consistently one of the UK's most attractive locations for attracting inward investment.
- 65% of international companies setting up or expanding in the Thames Valley have been supported.

For the reasons outlined above we support the proposals.

Yours faithfully,



**Paul Britton**

**Chief Executive, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group**

<sup>1</sup> Slough-Ealing-Hounslow Economic Impact studies (2013)