

7<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Sent via email to: [tfse@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:tfse@eastsussex.gov.uk)

To Whom it May Concern,

### **Transport Strategy for the South East – Consultation Response**

On behalf of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), we thank you for the opportunity to review the Transport Strategy for the South East (TfSE) document and provide our initial response to the consultation in this letter, prior to its closing on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

TVCC is the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Swindon. Whilst the consultation document covers the area from Berkshire to the Isle of Wight and Hampshire through to Kent, we have focused our response by writing from the perspective of the business community across Berkshire. Nevertheless, the surrounding areas are also of strategic importance to TVCC as part of the wider connectivity of the region.

#### **Introduction**

[TVCC](#) is one of the largest accredited Chambers within the UK and the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for the Thames Valley region. We represent over 4,000 companies in our membership. The region is home to the [UK's top two performing cities](#) (Oxford and Reading), 2<sup>nd</sup> largest trading city in the UK (Slough), the fastest growing city (Reading), the [number one university in the world](#) for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year (University of Oxford). We are consistently one of the highest performing regions for attracting [inward investment](#) in the UK, and are one of the [UK's most active trading locations](#), with the Chamber itself delivering over 14% of the UK's overall trade documentation. The GDP of the Thames Valley is estimated at around £83,848 million with an expected 1.9% GVA growth rate until 2021 – outstripping the UK average.

TVCC is committed to supporting the futureproofing and delivery of a resilient regional transport (including water, digital, telecommunications, air, road and rail) infrastructure; this is clearly demonstrated by the fact that two of our five main priorities in the Chamber's key policy statement document, the [2020 Business Manifesto](#), are to support the expansion of Heathrow Airport and to secure the delivery of the [Western Rail Link to Heathrow](#) (WRLtH). These projects will benefit businesses, residents and the economy far beyond the Thames Valley.

We commend TfSE's Transport Strategy in its mission to grow the South East's economy, by delivering safe, sustainable and integrated transport systems which will, in turn, make the South East a more productive and globally competitive area. Having reviewed the content of the [Transport Strategy for the South East](#) document, we see a correlation between the areas supported by TVCC and the three key principles that are set out in the strategy –

improving productivity and attracting investment to continue economic growth, improving wellbeing, inclusion and quality of life and protecting and enhancing the South East's unique, natural and historic environment.

### **Economic: Improve productivity and attracting investment to grow out the economy and better compete in the global marketplace**

TVCC has proven expertise in helping co-ordinate and deliver inward investment activity across the region, adding to its position as a leading international business location and consistently one of the highest performing regions for inward investment outside of London.

- The Chamber is focused on strengthening partnerships, helping to attract and retain investment, trade, jobs and people. Therefore, we agree with the consultation document that a key priority of the transport strategy should be to ensure that the network continues to facilitate and enable trade, improve business connectivity and provide access to international gateways in order to make certain that these areas continue to develop as independent economic hubs.
- We welcome the approach by TfSE to engage with a future Journeys scenario to help futureproof and deliver resilient infrastructure networks. We recognise the associated challenges (of predictions into the future), but suggest the Thames Valley region is ideally placed to be part of this assessment – as the acknowledged home of the UK's digital technologies sector, many of the Chamber's, and wider businesses community's members, are at the forefront of innovation in future technologies and their applications.
- With Crossrail imminent and benefitting the region, we support initiatives/developments, such as smart ticketing, to integrate journeys across the widest area and improve the experience of passengers and efficiency of travel in/around the Thames Valley.

### **Social: Improve health, safety, wellbeing, quality of life, and access to opportunities for everyone**

These themes continue to run throughout our Business Manifesto and are therefore at the forefront of the Chamber's work, ensuring a 'Connected Thames Valley', since we:

- Encourage measures and support networks to develop an inclusive Thames Valley, where everyone can engage in the benefits of a prosperous region.
- Raise awareness of the importance of moving people between transportation hubs and highlight solutions to address the associated change (*'the last mile problem'*).

### **Environmental: Protect and enhance the South East's unique, natural and historic environment**

TVCC has demonstrated its full commitment to ensuring economic growth does not come at a cost to the environment, as outlined in our Business Manifesto and in other consultation responses.

- [Response to Heathrow Airport Expansion Consultation](#) (September 2019), which underlines TVCC's commitment to supporting 'sustainable growth and meeting environmental targets, including reduced congestion, pollution, noise, waste and wider impact on local residents, etc', whilst encouraging 'greater clarity of and ambition for a range of economic and environmental outcomes'.

### **Notwithstanding, we would like to see a stronger focus and emphasis on the following:**

- Reduction in carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 and minimising the contribution of transport and travel to climate change: Whilst we commend the ambition for the region's transport system to achieve zero-carbon by 2050, we believe this to be a challenging ambition and would therefore welcome the inclusion of further detail showing how this will be achieved in real terms and where possible before 2050. It would also be valuable for the document to identify the exemplar projects we can showcase to promote the SE as a leading region in delivering such a target.

- Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLth): TVCC is fully committed to supporting this project, which will aim to remove passengers from major roads, reducing congestion and pollution – see consultation response to [Improving Rail Links to Heathrow from the West & Beyond](#). Not only this, but it will contribute to the UK's climate change targets and to Heathrow's environmental mitigation targets and freight journey challenges. As the consultation document discusses, London Heathrow Airport is set to grow significantly with the development of its third runway; however, if transport measures do not develop in line with increased pressure that the development will bring, there is a risk that its potential economic benefits could be limited.
- Involvement with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs): The strategy, although it mentions the need to work closely with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Berkshire Unitary Councils (and other LEPs/County Councils across the South East), should focus more heavily on the need to do so in terms of both the planning and implementation in order to ensure synergy across the region.

Moving forward, the TVCC would welcome the opportunity to actively engage in and contribute to TfSE's 'next stage' studies to explore some of the themes in the Strategy, including – but not limited to the:

- Area focussed studies and freight strategy and action plan.
- Key (road) corridors, notably the A33, A34(T), A329/A322 (M4 to M3), A4, A404 (M4 to M40) and A40/A420.

Finally, TfSE needs to stay aligned with the Thames Valley's business travellers to establish and maintain a credible and achievable Transport Strategy which will bring clear benefits to all who rely on the region's transport network and in so doing drive the UK's true turbo-economy. By supporting the economy of the Thames Valley and wider South East, TfSE must:

- Invest in the success of the Thames Valley and South East economy – a powerful motor of national prosperity - adding more than £200 billion to the UK economy and the future prosperity of UK plc, post BREXIT.
- Build on the evidential advantages and strength of the Thames Valley and South East for inward investment.
- Promote access to international markets for trade. Ensure our important nodes (e.g. London Heathrow and freight terminals such as Dover and Southampton) remain fit for purpose and internationally competitive.
- Foster and deliver the development of a more sustainable approach to connectivity in the South East.
- Maintain a long-term vision and delivery strategy *and stick to it*, lobbying Government to ensure investment decisions are taken promptly, expedited efficiently and remain apolitical.

We thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this framework document and we welcome every opportunity to not only be consulted, but to be involved as a key stakeholder in future work, helping to further shape and frame the region's transport strategy.

Yours sincerely,



**Paul Britton**  
**Chief Executive**