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Network Rail
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Dear Fiona,

RE: Application 15/03703/FUL Construction of Culvert under the railway between Hinksey Drain and Hinksey stream- Response to consultee comments

In response to consultee comments I thought it would be useful to outline some of the benefits to rail passengers expected as a result of the scheme. I thought it would also be useful to clarify some of the project cost breakdown in order to understand the cost and benefits relationship of the scheme.

The consultee correctly highlights the costs of the scheme of c£18m, however this is broken down in to a number of elements:

- £4m Life expired track and points renewals
- £0.5m Life expired bridge deck renewal
- £0.4m Life expire drainage work
- £1.0m Environment Agency funding for passive provision of additional culvert capacity.
- £12.7m Track raising, culvert and associated civils and costs associated with closing the railway line.

It's important to note that even if the scheme was not to be progressed, the life expired renewals work would still be required and therefore does not form part of the cost benefit analysis for the enhancement. We are however using this rare opportunity to close the railway line to complete as much improvement work as possible.

Previous closures as a result of flooding of the railway line have been estimated to cost the industry in the region of £3m per closure. This is based on an average of recent events of varying duration, during which, in recent years, we have suffered flooding 11 times in 14 years.

We have been able to include passive provision for additional capacity in the proposed culverts at the request of the Environment Agency; orifice plates shall be installed on to the culverts and can be removed if and when additional capacity is required. Whilst it is recognised that the wider Oxford flood conveyance scheme is not yet progressed to a detailed level, it is expected to be, and should the additional capacity be required, we will have saved considerable cost and disruption associated with closing the railway line on a second occasion.

There are approximately 7.5 million rail journeys a year passing along the line between Didcot and Oxford, as well as serving key traffic flows from Oxford into London, including

heavily use commuter services, the railway also provides key links for local communities into the city of Oxford as well as services from the south coast to the north of the country.

The railway corridor between Oxford and Didcot is of strategic importance to the freight network, rail freight should be regarded as an integral stage in a logistics chain which ensures delivery through multi-modal operations to meet customer requirements. Gone are the days where wagons and traffic can be lost in transit. Today is about a highly demanding, competitive market where customer service and timely delivery is crucial to retaining business and market share.

The trains that operate through Hinksey are principally high value automotive traffic for export and deep-sea inter-modal traffic from and to the Port of Southampton. These trains contribute millions of pounds to the British economy and have key connections with shipping at the Ports of Tilbury and Southampton for the automotive business; the Trains are time critical in their departures and arrival.

The BMW plant at Cowley is a key employer in the Oxford area and has a production line that cannot stop without detailed planning. The production line produces over 800 cars a day and if rail services are unable to serve the plant it is only a matter of days before production will cease as the plant reaches capacity. The deep-sea inter-modal traffic is also critical in terms of departure and arrival times as the traffic conveyed also has key connections with shipping at the Port of Southampton. At the inland terminals the onward shipment of containers is also a critical logistics component, as is the return of containers to those terminals for return to the Port.

There are many other types of traffic that pass through Hinksey all of which are critical to the wider economy in one form or another. The rail freight industry is committed to on network performance and has its own regulatory measure alongside that of passenger operators. Freight operators have to work with the whole industry to ensure that all traffic operates as robustly as possible on a daily basis. Rail freight will only operate when there is the business to support it and therefore cancelling or delaying rail freight imports costs and erodes customer service.

Taking freight off railways will put further strain on the UK road network and environmental benefits associated with taking freight by rail are lost.

The previous effects of flooding in the Hinksey area have cost freight operators and their customers millions of pounds. The flood alleviation work is critical to the future of freight operation through this area.

The flood alleviation work is seen to be crucial to protect freight business in the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Grew
Senior Sponsor – Network Rail