

STRUCTURE UPDATE

7 April 2022

Please note that the following recommendation/s is/are subject to consideration and determination by the Board before taking effect.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (a) Following the initial trial period, the Board approve the secondment of up to two staff from the constituent authorities to lead the work of the Peninsula Transport Sub-National Transport Body.
- (b) The cost of providing the seconded staff be met from the annual budget for Peninsula Transport.

1. Background

The original operating model for Peninsula Transport was based entirely on officer support being provided by the constituent local authorities and where appropriate, technical work commissioned from specialist consultants. This model has over time come under increasing pressure and has begun to restrict Peninsula Transport's ability to support the constituent authorities, fully engage with co-opted members and represent the Peninsula's transport needs at the national level. In response to these pressures, changes were introduced in November 2021 with the introduction of two seconded roles. This has begun to address these pressures and improve the performance of the STB and it is therefore proposed to make this change to the structure permanent.

2. Proposal

Since its formation in 2018, the Peninsula Transport Sub-National Transport Body (STB) has functioned without any directly appointed staff. All the roles and responsibilities have been covered by officers from within the constituent authorities, with support from specialist consultants where required. Whilst this model has allowed it to focus resources on activities and not administrative functions, as the demands on STB's nationally has grown, this has put increased pressure on the staff within the constituent authorities and an increased reliance on specialist consultants for a wider range of non-technical tasks.

The majority of the funding for the seven STB's in England is provided by the Department for Transport who monitor performance against the work programmes set annually. In the case of Peninsula Transport, this process highlighted the need to reconsider how the STB was structured in order to improve the delivery of the work programme and enable it to play a greater role in representing the strategic needs of the Peninsula.

Given need to make changes to improve the delivery of the work programme for 2021/22 and beyond, it was agreed that creating two seconded positions would be the most effective way of addressing this, providing suitable staff from the constituent authorities could be released into these roles on a part-time basis. Two staff were able to be released and the changes came into effect from November 2021. These changes were on a trial basis in order to assess the effectiveness of this change on the performance of the STB, before making this arrangement permanent.

The changes were supported by the Chair of Peninsula Transport and the Board updated on the changes at the meeting on 2nd December 2021, with a commitment to report back on the effectiveness of these changes at the next meeting of the Board on 7th April 2022.

The Department for Transport has continued to monitor the performance of Peninsula Transport and support the changes and the progress which has been made since they were introduced in the autumn. The challenges faced by Peninsula Transport were also recognised in the recent letter dated 21 March 2022 from the Minister for Roads, Buses and Places, Baroness Vere, who noted that as ‘a newer STB, you have not had the same amount of resources, or staff as some of the more established STBs. We want to use this Spending Review period to provide you with more funding to bridge this gap, to help you build your capability.’

Given the progress made since the changes to structure were introduced and the support received from the Department for Transport, together with a funding commitment for the next three financial years, it is proposed to make this change to the staff structure permanent. The effectiveness of this change will continue to be independently monitored by the Department for Transport to ensure that Peninsula Transport continues to develop and is able to play an effective role supporting its constituent authorities, working with its co-opted members and representing the Peninsula at the national level.

3. Options

Given the increasing difficulties Peninsula Transport was facing in performing its role and growing reliance on specialist consultants to undertake some of the core functions, do-nothing was not considered an option.

Consideration was given to creating permanent positions within Peninsula Transport to address the growing pressures. A number of the other Sub-National Transport Bodies have adopted this approach with the appointment of core staff. In the case of the Peninsula, this would have taken some time to put in place and would have resulted in a significant increase in the annual operational cost of Peninsula Transport.

The option of seconding staff from the constituent authorities offered the potential to respond to what was a growing problem more quickly whilst at the same time, ensuring that the cost of operating Peninsula Transport continues to be kept to a minimum. However, this option is dependent on suitable officers being available from the constituent authorities to take-up these secondments.

Given the need to address the increasing pressures in both a timely and cost-effective way, the option of creating two seconded positions was pursued and suitable officers sought from the constituent authorities. This approach was supported by the Department for Transport in order to improve the delivery of the agreed work programme for 2021/22.

4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

As the main funder of Peninsula Transport, the Department for Transport have been fully engaged in the development, implementation and monitoring of these changes. The Chair of Peninsula Transport has also been kept updated on progress and Board informed at the meeting in December 2021.

5. Financial Considerations

The annual cost of creating the two seconded roles will be £159,000 and has been included in the budget for 2022/23.

6. Environmental Impact Considerations

There are no direct environmental impacts resulting from the creation and operation of the two seconded roles. There is no additional office accommodation required and the majority of the day-to-day work can be undertaken remotely, thereby keeping the need to travel to a minimum.

7. Equality Considerations

Whilst all the constituent local authorities had the opportunity to put forward staff to fill these secondments, it is recognised that it will always being a challenge to find suitable staff with the time available to fill these positions alongside their substantive roles. The work of Peninsula Transport already draws upon support from officers within each of the constituent authorities and this is expected to continue. The experience this provides is seen as important in creating staff with the skills and expertise who could potentially fill the seconded positions in the future.

8. Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations.

9. Risk Management Considerations

The risk of Peninsula Transport not delivering the work programme for 2021/22 was identified through the review process in place with the Department for Transport. This resulted in the proposed changes in the structure and transfer of staff from the constituent authorities into the new roles. The performance of Peninsula Transport in meeting its commitments continues to be reviewed regularly with the Department for Transport to assess the need for any further mitigations to be put in place.

10. Public Health Impact

There are no specific public health impacts arising from this report.

11. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

The change to the staff structure introduced in November 2021 has proved successful in addressing the pressures Peninsula Transport was coming under and are supported by the Department for Transport. It is therefore proposed to make the change to the staff structure permanent in order that Peninsula Transport can continue to develop its role as the body representing the strategic transport needs of the region.