

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting20th January 2022

1. Title of Item/Report

The Stockton & Darlington Railway (S&DR) Bicentenary

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was invited to pledge support in principle for proposals developed jointly by this Council and partners to develop a connected set of visitor sites, experiences and interpretation that would become a permanent visitor attraction and mark the bi-centenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 2025.

The proposal had been developed by Stockton in partnership with, Darlington Borough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Durham County Council working with Historic England, Network Rail, the Friends of SDR and others linking Locomotion Museum in Shildon, Darlington's Rail Heritage Quarter, Preston Hall Museum & Grounds and Stockton's Riverside. The Partnership had commissioned major pieces of work to provide the foundation for the development of the permanent visitor attraction and the promotion of the Bicentenary. These included a full access audit for the length of the line, historic significance and condition surveys of buildings and structures, marketing and interpretation frameworks, feasibility studies into live steam and early locomotive exhibitions, and an authoritative independent Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) to calculate the potential value of the S&DR to the Tees Valley and County Durham.

The 200th anniversary in 2025 was likely to attract visitors from across the world and establish the profile and identity of the S&DR visitor attraction in all its parts, celebrating our heritage, changing perceptions about the area, and driving long term visitor economy growth. The EIA highlighted a potential 13% increase in overnight visits and a 27% increase in international visitors, compared to pre-covid benchmarks. The Bicentenary also offered the opportunity to foster connections between communities in the Tees Valley and County Durham, encouraging pride and optimism, and highlighting the vital role of innovation and entrepreneurialism to our economy now and in the future.

Cabinet noted that much work had already been done to lay foundations

for the 2025 activity, but there was a need to increase our capacity to deliver and move from concepts to confirmed programmes. Feasibility studies had been produced for the major strands of work, these included estimates for costs and potential impacts. Some sources of partner funding were already confirmed but many were still subject to further application and assessment processes. For example, on behalf of the partnership, Darlington Borough Council led an application for National Heritage Lottery Funding (NHLF) for capital investment and community participation work from Stockton to Shildon. This would add considerable capacity to the work of the Friends of Stockton Darlington Railway and provide staff to work with communities in Stockton Borough, Darlington Borough and County Durham. NHLF had recently confirmed stage 1 success for the £2.87m bid.

Details of the draft outline programme to celebrate the bi-centenary were noted which, although not confirmed and subject to the confirmation of resources from across a wide range of stakeholders, was an achievable programme illustrating the potential scale and reach of the bicentenary. The likely cost for the delivery of the programme proposed was in the range of £1.3 - £1.9m and work to secure financial contributions from other agencies was ongoing but it was expected that a provisional allocation c.£1.3m was required as the basis for further work. The identification of appropriate resources would be considered in subsequent Medium Term Financial Plan reports to Cabinet and ultimately Council for approval.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the outline of proposed celebrations of the S&DR Bicentenary and support the identification of resources through the MTFP process.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To seek support in principle for the investment required to ensure Stockton Borough was recognized, visited and celebrated for its contribution to rail heritage.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight - Friday 28th January 2022

Proper Officer
24 January 2022