

Report to: **Partnership Board – Transport for the South East**

Date of meeting: **29 January 2024**

By: **Lead Officer, Transport for the South East**

Title of report: **Communications and Stakeholder Engagement update**

Purpose of report: **To update the board on communications and stakeholder engagement activity**

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since the last board meeting.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an update on communications and engagement activity undertaken since the last board meeting, including support provided to technical projects, the induction of new political representatives and recent and upcoming events.

2. Recent communications and engagement activity

2.1 We continue to support the planning and implementation of communication and engagement activity across the technical work programme. Recent press releases issued have promoted our first State of the Region report and our interactive Story Map which allows users to our website to search for TfSE supported schemes in their areas. Both press releases were picked up by trade and local media.

2.2 Our MP engagement plan continues to result in meeting MPs across the region. Several meetings have now taken place. We continue to form good relationships with the offices of MPs across the south east as part of our ongoing engagement.

2.3 We are delivering against the objectives set in the 2023/24 communications and engagement plan, with activity supported by web content and social media coverage. Our social media numbers continue to increase monthly in terms of followers and viewings.

2.4 We worked alongside our technical colleagues to pull together the Business Plan for 2024/25 and design a document that fully showcases our ambitions for the future.

3. New Engagement Manager appointed

3.1 We have appointed a new Engagement Manager who joined the team last month. Jaimie McSorley joins from a role at Brighton & Hove City Council, where she worked for ten years within the City Transport team leading on large-and-small scale engagement and consultation across strategy and delivery.

4. Transport Strategy Refresh stakeholder engagement

4.1 We have created a sub-brand to support the engagement work around our Transport Strategy Refresh to enforce the importance of hearing from those across the region. **'Your Voices'** will be used to market and brand every piece of engagement work including literature, social media, virtual and face-to-face events. Working groups for this engagement work were established in December with invites being issued. Work is underway to structure workshops to ensure we obtain the views of those across the south east with a special focus on hard-to-reach groups.

5. Transport Forum digital engagement

5.1 As part of the refreshed Transport Forum, we are developing new ways of engaging with members of our Transport Forum and related groups. This will see a bi-annual digital engagement session taking place with TfSE's Chair and Lead Officer answering questions that have been previously submitted by forum members. This will allow our Chair and Lead Officer to ensure their answers are detailed and comprehensive. The plan is to film these sessions and then make them available to watch on demand on our YouTube channel.

6. Upcoming events and speaker slots

6.1 Future events/speaker slots

- 13 February 2024 – Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport SE Region Talk. Mark Valleley presenting a webinar entitled: 'TfSE - Supporting the freight sector in the UK's International Gateway'
- 28 February 2024 – STB Conference in Manchester. Details of speakers TBC.

We are actively pursuing opportunities for TfSE staff to speak at events and fill speaker slots to further raise awareness of the organisation and of Sub-national transport bodies.

7. The TfSE Podcast

7.1 The TfSE Podcast continues to gain new listeners every month. Recent monthly episodes have included discussions regarding electric vehicles, climate change and women in transport. The podcast is available on the TfSE website and on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. Hosted by Tia Shelley, our Comms and Public Relations Assistant (who is also our apprentice), the latest episode features a look ahead to the challenges and

opportunities for TfSE in 2024 as Chair Keith Glazier and Lead Officer Rupert Clubb share their thoughts.

8. MP engagement and public affairs

8.1 TfSE Chair Keith Glazier and Lead Officer Rupert Clubb recently had a virtual meeting with Gosport MP Dame Caroline Dinenage where they briefed her on the background of TfSE and outlined the schemes we were supporting in her constituency. Rupert Clubb met with Kent MPs Tracey Crouch (Chatham) and Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) face-to-face in Chatham and shared with them our background and plans.

8.2 Our Communications and Public Affairs Manager Duncan Barkes had a virtual meeting with the Constituency Support Manager for Maidstone & The Weald MP Helen Grant to discuss our background and regional role. Duncan and TfSE's Head of Programme and Policy Keir Wilkins had a similar virtual meeting with the Constituency Manager for East Surrey MP Claire Coutinho.

8.3 A delegation from TfSE will be meeting Bexhill and Battle MP Huw Merriman in Westminster on 30 January. Huw is also a transport minister and we will be updating him on our plans for the 2024/25.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

9.1 In conclusion, we will continue to keep our communications and engagement activities under review following the priorities and objectives outlined in the communication and engagement plan.

9.2 The Partnership Board are recommended to note and agree the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since the last Partnership Board meeting.

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