

NEWS FROM RAIL CENTRAL

Monday 23 May 2016

RAIL CENTRAL PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS ATTRACT STRONG INTEREST

1,000 people attend series of eight local Public Exhibitions introducing the draft proposals

Rail Central's initial public exhibitions attracted approximately 1,000 people as information and an introduction to the scheme were put on display at village halls and local venues between 28 April and 21 May.

A series of eight public exhibitions in Blisworth, Milton Malsor, Collingtree, Roade and Towcester were held to explain more about the emerging proposals for Rail Central and invite feedback.

Each exhibition was hosted by members of Ashfield Land, the developer for Rail Central, and a full technical team spanning disciplines from transport & highways to architecture, planning, ecology, rail freight and economics.

The public exhibitions are part of an initial phase of community consultation being carried out to generate feedback on the scheme design and enable refinement and improvements to be made before the application – which will be in the form of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application – is submitted around this time next year (ie Q1 2017).

James Digby from Rail Central said: "Rail Central is a nationally significant scheme with the potential to deliver significant benefits – but those benefits need to be balanced with local impact and the local context. With around 1,000 people coming to the exhibitions over the last three weeks, we've been able to introduce and explain the scheme, where we are in the planning and design process, what happens next and how, ultimately, we are looking to use input via the consultation to improve the scheme. We're grateful to everyone who visited the exhibitions and we're looking forward to continuing our important consultation throughout the year."

Visitors to the public exhibitions and anyone wanting to participate in this first phase of public consultation have until 30 September to provide comments. As well as being on display at the exhibitions, the consultation information is available on the website – www.railcentral.com – and at deposit locations* locally.

In addition to the public exhibitions held during the last three weeks, Rail Central has established a Local Liaison Group (LLG) involving local parish councils and stakeholders. The LLG provides an additional way to share and coordinate information on the scheme.

Further consultation is planned over the summer and autumn in line with an agreed Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) which sets out a full range of engagement in line with the planning process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

As further technical work and studies that were outlined at the public exhibitions are completed, additional detail will be introduced into the consultation.

James Digby adds: "We are at a relatively early stage in the development of the scheme which means asking for feedback now is a good time so that suggestions can be taken on board and the scheme design influenced. Layering on more detail will happen over the coming months and will be important as we look to refine the design."

Rail Central is a proposal for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at a key strategic location where the West Coast Main Line meets the Northampton Loop Line adjacent to the A43 and within 2 miles of the M1.

It is in line with Government policy for investment and expansion in rail freight capability and could see approximately 8,000 jobs created.

Subject to permission being granted to build Rail Central, the earliest potential start of construction would be in 2019.

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Media information:

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* Deposit locations are agreed public libraries and offices where the consultation information is available to view digitally. Full information is on the Rail Central website. Venues include: Northamptonshire County Council offices, Northampton Borough Council offices, Northamptonshire Central Library, Roade Library and Towcester Library.