

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 23 May 2001

Subject: **Central Railway**

Report of: Head of Regional Transport Planning

**Recommendations:**

For information - a verbal update on the latest position will be made to the Committee.

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**1 Background**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 6 March 2001 this Committee received a short verbal briefing alerting them to the existence of the proposal by Central Railway to develop a rail based freight service between Liverpool and Lille.
- 1.2 The Committee was advised that your Officers, along with representatives from SEEDA, were endeavouring to ascertain more detailed information as to the nature of the proposal.
- 1.3 Subsequent to that Committee meeting I met with representatives from Central Railway on 29 March. Following that meeting I wrote to Central Railway on 3 April setting out the key technical issues on which the Assembly sought further information. In summary, the issues identified were:
  - the need for a clear and detailed description of Central Railway's preferred scheme;
  - on the assumption that a preferred scheme exists, the basis on which that scheme has been arrived at needs explanation;
  - the need to explain in more detail the relationship between the proposal and the spatial strategy set out within RPG9;
  - the need to identify the predicted benefits and impacts of the preferred scheme on a regional basis;
  - clarification on the preferred location, access arrangements and impact arising from the proposed terminals;

- the need to clarify the organisational and operational arrangements associated with the preferred scheme in relation to the remainder of the national rail network.
- 1.4 Subsequent to this letter a further meeting has been arranged with Central Railway at which it is envisaged these issues will be discussed further. This meeting was scheduled to take place on 14 May and the outcome of the discussion will be reported verbally to the Committee on the 23 May.
- 2 The Regional Development Agencies View**
- 2.1 On 4 April the RDA Chairman reviewed Central Railway's proposal. Whilst it is understood that the RDA Chairman are broadly in favour of the concept of having a new strategic rail freight link between the English Regions and Europe, there remain a number of substantial issues associated with the proposal which need to be resolved before they could assemble a joint view on it.
- 2.2 It is understood that the issues identified by RDA Chairman include the need to clarify:
- the cost estimates; particularly given the apparent lack of detail associated with some aspects of the proposal;
  - the view of the Strategic Rail Authority;
  - the level of support for the proposal from the French Government;
  - the location of proposed terminals and impact arising there from;
  - the extent of the environmental impact, given that route appears to have a major impact on the Peak District National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south east;
  - issues arising from the relationship of the proposal with the planning process.
- 2.3 It is understood that the RDAs are seeking further clarification from Central Railway on these issues.
- 3 Next Steps**
- 3.1 Until such time as the technical issues identified in paragraph 1.3 of this report have been answered it would be premature for your officers to advise you formally as to the merits (or otherwise) of the Central Railway proposal. It is therefore proposed that this Committee be kept advised of developments associated with this proposal as appropriate.

**Martin Tugwell**  
**Head of Regional Transport Planning**

10 May 2001