

For immediate use

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TELFORD RAILFREIGHT TERMINAL

Major manufacturing and warehousing areas of Telford have moved one step closer to having a dedicated railfreight terminal.

The project, which has come together through an innovative partnership of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin, Ministry of Defence and English Partnerships, will see the reinstatement of the rail line which ran from Wellington to Donnington.

The terminal will be a commercial, open access facility available for all types of inward and outbound traffic for businesses in the area. The MoD will have a dedicated rail connection to the terminal for its own traffic to and from its' major site at Donnington. The project also has the potential to provide rail connections to some major manufacturing sites and the application includes the ability to put sidings directly into the GKN Sankey site at Hadley.

The project is being promoted through a Transport & Works Act Order, with the formal application being submitted to the Government's Department for Transport on 30th July.

The facility is expected to handle approximately 200 – 250,000 tonnes of freight per year and will have the ability to grow easily to handle around 750,000 tonnes per year.

A great deal of work has already been undertaken including a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment, together with extensive consultation with local communities and the business community. The partnership has worked closely with residents and made significant changes to the project, including landscaped barriers, in response to their concerns. These changes have been included in the application.

Graham Fairhurst, Borough of Telford & Wrekin's Engineering Manager, is overseeing the project. He said: "The Telford Railfreight Terminal is a very important project for the town and the surrounding area. It has been promoted to sustain existing jobs and to help create the conditions for further investment that will bring new jobs.

"Telford has a fast-growing population and needs to create job opportunities to sustain the youngsters coming into the workplace. The area has a strong manufacturing tradition and transport is a major issue, especially when helping companies to be competitive.

“The Railfreight Terminal will provide businesses with transport choices and will undoubtedly be attractive in terms of cost and levels of service.”

The terminal will also bring environmental benefits. Graham added: “It is recognised that rail transport is more environmentally sustainable than road and the creation of a terminal in Telford will have positive benefits for the environment. Many businesses are looking to ‘green’ their supply chains as evidence to their customers and partner businesses of their commitment to the environment.

“The project is in accordance with the Government’s strategy of increasing the quantity of freight travelling by rail by 80% over a 10 year period. This will only be achieved by the construction of new terminals and by capturing more of the freight flows linked to manufacturing and logistics activities. Both of these sectors are very strong in the Telford area.”

Major Martin Shakespeare from the MoD’s Defence Logistic Organisation said: “As a Government department we are actively working to identify freight flows that can be moved from road to rail in support of the Government’s initiative. Donnington is the only major MoD stores depot without rail access and we envisage moving significant quantities of stores and equipment to the terminal during peacetime.

“Our recent experience on OP TELIC has shown the wisdom of the MoD keeping a strategic rail capability as we doubled our containerised and box van traffic during the conflict.”

Kevin Webb, Telford Town Centre Development Manager at English Partnerships, commented: “Accessibility is one of Telford’s key attributes for businesses relocating or setting up in the area. This project will dramatically improve freight access, particularly to Hortonwood and the Donnington Business Park, locations where we are currently marketing sites for industrial use.

“The rail proposal is a major step forward for the town – already recognised as one of the most dynamic centres in the UK – and will contribute significantly to its further growth as a strong industrial base.

“This is great news for Telford. Boosting prospects for business will lead to more job opportunities, attract more people to set up home here and generally enhance the development growth of the town.”

The project is being taken forward in conjunction with the North Telford Footpath/Cycleway which will result in a high quality link across the north of the town on a route generally parallel to the rail link to the freight terminal. The Footpath/Cycleway will permit the current informal access along the rail alignment to be closed and also significantly improve access to employment, colleges and training facilities and to the centres of Hadley and Wellington.

The submission of the Transport & Works Act Order Application is an important milestone in the project, following which a private sector partner will be sought. As part of the preliminary work, detailed liaison has also taken place with the Strategic Rail Authority, who support the project, and with Network Rail.

The project has been received favourably by the business community: Karen Webb, Director of Marketing at Shropshire Chamber and Business Link said:

“It has long been apparent that the lack of any local rail freight facilities is a serious omission in an area where a significant number of large manufacturing companies are located. Foreign owned companies are often well used to effective rail transportation and we have some concerns that the current lack of good facilities here could be detrimental to any decisions made either by existing companies or potential inward investors.

“A rail freight terminal would also help to alleviate some of the problems faced by businesses currently hauling goods by road and encountering increasing difficulties with the inadequate transport infrastructure which exists, particularly around the West Midlands.”

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