

Meeting notes: NWRR Executive Board, 23 September 2024

Attendees – Mark Barrow (MB), Cllr Dan Morris (DM), Andy Wilde (AW), Matt Johnson (MJ), Gary Dymond (GD)

Apologies – Donna Payne

- **Procurement Update:** MJ provided a comprehensive update on the procurement process, detailing the extension of the negotiation period, the productive discussions with tenderers, and the revised programming for final tender submissions. The aim is to sharpen the quality and price elements of submissions to add real value for the Council.
 - **Extension of Negotiation Period:** MJ explained the decision to extend the negotiation period to allow further work and nuanced discussions with tenderers around risk transfer and the price element, emphasizing the value this would add to the Council.
 - **Productive Discussions with Tenderers:** Two full one-day sessions were held with tenderers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], resulting in productive discussions and clarification of misconceptions, particularly around social value and working in the floodplain area.
 - **Revised Programming for Submissions:** The final tender submissions are expected by 14th of October, followed by a rapid re-evaluation process, with the evaluation report to be finalized by WSP for a decision meeting scheduled for 28th of October.
- **Funding and Budget Concerns:** MJ discussed the potential use of the Local Transport Fund (LTF) as a mechanism to cover the Council's match funding requirement for the project, highlighting the political and financial implications of such a decision.
 - **Local Transport Fund Utilization:** MJ highlighted the possibility of using the LTF to cover the Council's match funding requirement, noting the political sensitivity of allocating a significant portion of countywide funds to a Shrewsbury-centric project.
 - **Financial Review and Implications:** There is an ongoing national financial review of strategic projects, and the LTF allocation could be rebranded or refocused, which may impact the project's funding strategy.
 - **Alternative Funding Mechanisms:** Without the LTF, the Council may need to consider borrowing, which is currently unpalatable, making the LTF the preferred funding mechanism for the project's shortfall.
- **Risk Management:** MJ and GD discussed the current risk register, emphasizing the need for more granular reporting on risks to improve oversight and management. The discussion also touched on the importance of having a detailed risk management process as the project moves into the delivery phase.
 - **Granular Risk Reporting:** MJ and GD emphasized the importance of detailed risk reporting, suggesting the creation of a top 10 risk register that amalgamates technical and corporate risks for better oversight.
 - **Risk Management in Delivery Phase:** As the project transitions into the delivery phase, there is a focus on ensuring a robust risk management process that aligns with NEC contract requirements and monthly payment structures.
- **Communications Strategy:** MJ highlighted the proactive approach being taken with stakeholders, including garnering letters of support for the project. This shift towards advocating for the scheme marks a positive pivot in the project's communications strategy.

- **Proactive Stakeholder Engagement:** MJ mentioned engaging with key stakeholders like Arriva and Midlands Connect, and the intent to send out letters seeking support for the project, marking a shift from defense to advocacy in communications.
- **Positive Communications Pivot:** The communications strategy now focuses on advocating for the scheme, with [REDACTED] leading the narrative and stakeholder engagement efforts.
- **Governance and Oversight:** AW suggested a reset of the board and governance arrangements by the end of October to better align with the project's transition into the construction phase, ensuring appropriate oversight and management.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Procurement Update:** Review and finalize the tender submissions by October 14th. (MJ)
- **Section 106 Agreements:** Finalize all three Section 106 agreements by October 24th. (MJ)
- **Planning Matters:** Engage with Severn Trent Water and EA to finalize the discharge of pre-commencement conditions. (MJ)
- **Risk Update:** Consolidate technical and corporate risk registers into a top 10 risks document. (MJ)
- **Comms Update:** Coordinate with [REDACTED] to advocate for the scheme and prepare for MP briefing. (MJ)
- **Budget Review:** Reassess commitment levels and authorization process for project expenses. (AW, [REDACTED] MJ)
- **Governance Reset:** Evaluate and potentially reset board and governance arrangements by end of October. (AW)
- **Acorn Planting Initiative:** Coordinate with [REDACTED] to identify land for planting acorns from significant trees. (MJ)

General:

- Extend future meeting invites to J [REDACTED] n to ensure [REDACTED] officer involvement. (MJ)
- Send reminders for substitutes to attend meetings if primary participants are unavailable. (MJ)