

Dear

Request for information on Bromsgrove Station – FoI 0007191

I am writing to confirm that the Department for Transport has now completed its search for the information which you requested on 13 December about the funding of electrification of the railway line from Barnt Green to Bromsgrove.

The funding for smaller scale enhancements such as the electrification to Bromsgrove isn't a direct requirement by the Department for Transport (DfT); it comes as a result of the rail industry responding to the Government's strategy for the railways, proposing to the Government the changes and investment necessary to deliver this strategy.

The Government published a High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for the national rail network in July 2007, as part of the 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' White Paper. The HLOS set out the passenger capacity, the train service reliability and the standards of safety the Government sought from the railway from 2009 to 2014, and stated the funds the Government had set aside to pay for it. The proposal to electrify the route to Bromsgrove and extend the cross-city suburban services to Bromsgrove was a rail industry solution to the requirement to provide extra passenger capacity for Birmingham, both in the peak (HLOS Table A4) and throughout the day (HLOS Table A3).

The response to the HLOS was co-ordinated by Network Rail (NR), which consulted with the train operators and published in late 2007 a strategic business plan on behalf of the rail industry setting out how the industry proposed it meet the HLOS requirements. This plan is available on NR's website and you should refer to Route 17 West Midlands for details of Bromsgrove. The address is:
<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/StrategicBusinessPlan/RoutePlans/2007/R17%20-%20West%20Mids.pdf>

The independent Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) assessed the plan and evaluated whether the schemes would deliver the HLOS, whether they appeared to be the most efficient way of meeting the requirements, and how much Network Rail should be allowed for the cost of undertaking the infrastructure works. The costs of the Bromsgrove electrification scheme are set out on page 107 of the report 'Advice on Network Rail's

Strategic Business plan', produced for the ORR by Ove Arup & Partners. The consultant's report is available on the ORR's website at: <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/pr08-arupenh-040608.pdf>

The ORR published a Draft Determination in June 2008, in which the efficient cost of the Bromsgrove electrification was estimated to be £24m (Table A, page 367). It then went through a consultation process with the industry, culminating in October 2008 with its Final Determination, setting out what it required Network Rail to deliver and what Government funds should be provided for this. Electrification to Bromsgrove is required (Table E.1, page 443) but the Final Determination document does not show the individual scheme cost. Instead, a cost of £681m is given for this and a number of other similar projects. This funding is for the five years from 2009/10 to 2013/14 and, unless otherwise agreed, NR is expected to deliver the schemes by March 2014.

All rail enhancement funding sought by the HLOS was reviewed earlier this year as part of the Government Spending Review. The Secretary of State confirmed in November that the NR enhancement funding would continue as planned to the end of 2013/14.

Electrification to Bromsgrove assumed that a separate scheme to relocate Bromsgrove Station had been completed. This was expected to be jointly funded through Network Rail, the local train operator, London Midland, and Worcester County Council. The relocation was required because the current station could only accommodate three carriage trains. Demand on the Worcester – Birmingham route had already caused one peak train to be extended to four carriages and become too long to call at Bromsgrove. The confined station location meant the best option was to relocate, providing a new station access and a large car park.

The station relocation scheme ran into difficulty during 2009-10. The cost estimates rose above the funding available then, as economies were made to bring costs back down, the financial downturn hit and in late summer the £5m grant funding Worcester CC anticipated obtaining from central Government ceased to be available. When this happened, NR sought consent from the ORR to pause work on the electrification scheme as, until a new Bromsgrove station with longer platforms could be achieved, the electrification scheme was of very limited use. The committed electrification delivery date of December 2013 had always been subject to the provision of the new station, part funded by the region.

Since then Centro and Worcester CC have been working on an alternative funding package for the station relocation. Last month they put a formal proposal to the Department and we are now assessing the viability of their plans. The details of this remain commercially confidential at this stage, but we are hopeful they have found a way to fund the new Bromsgrove station. In parallel, the Department is working with London Midland on a train service enhancement proposal to expand cross-city services and extend them to Bromsgrove. A firm completion date for electric services to Bromsgrove isn't possible without agreement on the station relocation but if this were achieved we would anticipate electrification completion in 2014.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. The Department will, therefore, be simultaneously releasing to the public the information in this letter you requested.

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/04
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Your right to complain to DfT and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF