

Spelthorne Council and Heathrow set to work in partnership to develop Southern Light Rail Proposals

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Spelthorne Borough Council have been named as the first of nine official Innovation Partners to the Heathrow Expansion Programme, following an in depth selection process. The Innovation Partners initiative was set up by Heathrow with the aim of finding partners to bring forward ideas to improve passenger experience, drive cost efficiency, and deliver sustainability targets.

The announcement means Spelthorne and Heathrow will work in partnership to investigate the feasibility of a Southern Light Rail (SLR) scheme, which could support delivery of the transport targets set out on the Government's Airports National Policy Statement, and provide benefits for passengers, consumers, and the local area. The Southern Light Rail (SLR) scheme would connect Staines Town Centre directly to the airport.

The Council's winning bid, which showcased its advanced plans for the light rail link, could drive local transport improvements for residents that are sustainable, affordable and reduce congestion.

It is proposed that the SLR will form part of the Oyster card network, with the potential for 14.8 mppa journeys each year. The scheme could make a meaningful contribution to the Airports National Policy Statement's target of 55% of all journeys, to and from Heathrow, being by public transport by 2040.

Cllr Ian Harvey, Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council, said: "We want a fully privately funded light rail link into Heathrow delivered before the third runway is operational at no cost to the Treasury".

Light rail has many benefits, and is used by major international airports throughout the world, including JFK International, Beijing Capital Airport, Copenhagen Airport, and others across Europe and Asia. SLR would generate benefits for both Heathrow Airport and for Spelthorne. It would improve access to the airport for workers and passengers, bring significant economic benefits to Staines Town Centre, and can be delivered with minimal impacts on Staines Moor.

Cllr John Boughtflower, Spelthorne's Cabinet Lead on Heathrow expansion, said: "It is very positive that

Heathrow Airport seem to be recognising the potential of light rail in terms of providing quick, cost-effective and sustainable infrastructure”.

Emma Gilthorpe , Heathrow’s Executive Director for Expansion said that: “Our Innovation Partners Programme is an exciting way for Heathrow to collaborate and explore new ideas that could benefit passengers, communities, and help us deliver our plans sustainably and in a cost effective way. We are excited to work with Spelthorne to explore the SLR scheme which could improve connectivity for communities to the south of the airport, and enhance Heathrow’s integrated transport offer.”

Heathrow is set to unveil the full list of Innovation Partners in the autumn.

Photo: Spelthorne Borough Council