



**Promoting Britain's
Railway
for Passengers
and Freight**

Policy Directorate

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18th October 2013

Dear Sirs,

A Long-Term Rail Strategy for the North of England

Railfuture is pleased to submit this consolidated national response, which has been prepared by the Policy Directorate and with contributions from our regional branches within the Rail North area.

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches and two national branches for Scotland and Wales. We are Britain's leading independent rail lobby organization with a large number of affiliated Rail User Groups. Being funded entirely from membership subscriptions and donations, Railfuture enjoys non-partisan status and has absolutely no connections with political parties or organisations, trade unions or commercial interests. Railfuture is pro-rail but not anti-car or aviation.

I hope that the attached response to the consultation will be of use. Please contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

CRHyomes

Christopher R. Hyomes
Railfuture
for Director of Policy

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Rail North Strategy Consultation

There are nine sections to complete. Eight are about the strategy; the final section is about you.

RESPONSE FROM RAILFUTURE

Vision

Q1A. The five priorities of the Long Term Rail Strategy are:

Better connectivity

Better customer experience

Efficiency

Being locally responsive

Deriving full value from planned investments

Do you agree that these are the correct priorities? (please delete as appropriate)Yes -

But there are others. See Q1B

Q1B. Are there any other priorities that are important?

Increasing rail usage by modal shift from private cars and road freight, including parcels.

Close integration (timetables, fares/ticketing, provision of information) with other public transport, especially tram/LRT/metro systems

Transport spending to be concentrated on public transport improvement, not on new roads and road improvements (although repairing damaged roads must remain a high priority).

Q2. Recognising that it has to be achievable, is the Vision for rail in the North sufficiently ambitious?

We very much welcome this document, as it is the first public document that is really ambitious about the future of the rail system in the north of England. Whilst we make a considerable number of comments and suggestions below, we hope that you will take these as being offered by a critical friend. We consider that we are all on the same side.

There does not appear to be any strong commitment in the draft strategy to reopen closed routes that should never have been, and where the need for a railway is high (we would suggest for consideration Penrith – Keswick (access to National Park); Skipton – Colne



(regeneration of Pendle and Burnley, plus potential as a freight and diversionary route); Burscough chord (to enable Preston-Southport); Harrogate – Ripon – Thirsk (large urban (Ripon) and rural catchment area, plus connectivity to Harrogate); Beverley – York (diverted via Haxby) (especially for commuting and to provide a sustainable alternative to the A1079); Sheffield – Manchester via Woodhead (fast commuting between the two cities); Crigglestone chord (enables direct services to Barnsley and Sheffield from the Brighouse line and provides a faster route from Huddersfield); the Fleetwood branch (serves a large urban area and has freight potential). We also want the strategy to highlight the need for a full timetable on key routes that currently have a skeletal service (e.g., York-Pontefract-Sheffield, Leeds-Goole – Hull; Middlesbrough-Whitby; Sunderland-Hartlepool-Stockton-Yarm- Northallerton-York (all stations service)); and to support the use of freight lines for passenger services e.g Ashington-Blyth - Newcastle; (Wakefield-Pontefract-)Knottingley-Askern (new station)-Shaftholme Junction-(for Doncaster); Sandbach-Middlewich-Northwich; Stockton Cut Junction to Pelaw Junction to enable a direct service between Middlesbrough, Stockton, Washington New Town (new station), Gateshead and Newcastle (trains would reverse at Eaglescliffe) or to open brand new routes where local demand or through connectivity requires it (e.g. Bradford Crossrail ; Skelmersdale). In some cases, these may be as tram or tram-train services (e.g., Spen Valley; Leeds-Wetherby). We feel strongly that, as far as possible, tram systems (light rail) and heavy rail should be regarded as part of one large network rather than separate entities, even if different bodies operate them. We consider para 5.43 to lack ambition, as without new/reopened routes, or new routings using existing track, connectivity will always be unduly compromised. An example of a new service on existing passenger lines include Preston to Sheffield (or Doncaster) via Brighouse and Barnsley (with reverses at Todmorden and Wakefield Kirkgate).

We can identify a number of communities on existing passenger routes that need a railway station. These all serve significant populations, and include Elland, Haxby (so designed to serve a future reinstated line to Beverley, as well as the Scarborough line), Low Moor, Apperley Bridge, Kirkstall Forge, Hipperholme/Lightcliffe, Garstang, Milnsbridge, Flaxby Moor, Dore (main line platforms), Heeley, Millhouses, Methley, Armley Moor, Baguley, Peterlee, Birtlee).

We recognise that some of the service enhancements that we seek are dependent on the development of a new high-speed railway line to the north of England. We have not called this HS2 because we are currently investigating whether we consider that the current HS2 plans are the best ones to achieve this,.

Economic & social context

Q3. Do you agree that the relationship between economic growth and rail is correct?
(please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q4. Are there any other factors that need to be considered?

Yes.

Environmental and social impact. Achieving a modal shift will result in:

- Reduction in CO2 emissions to help reduce the rate global warming (and help to contribute to an eventual stabilisation of the earth's climate)
- Reduction in other pollutants including carcinogenic particulates.
- Less vehicle disturbance for those living or working near busy roads.
- Increased travel safety (rail is safer than car; in addition, reducing the number of road freight vehicles reduces the risk of their being involved in accidents, and lorry/car and lorry/bike accidents very often result in death or serious injury. Less road traffic makes the roads safer and more pleasant for cyclists and pedestrians).

Rail in the North

Q5. Do you agree with the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the North's rail provision? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q6. Are there any other issues that are important?

- Filling the gaps (lines and stations) created by closures, or because of developments since the rail system was built.
- Need for all operator's timetables (paper, websites and on stations) to give details of all trains on a particular route, and not just their own services.
- Need for heavy rail, and light rail/trams (and Leeds NGT), to be seamless as far as the passenger is concerned

- Parcels concentration complexes are not rail served – parcels are a major growth area, and significant environmental benefits can be achieved by transferring significant volumes of parcels trucking to rail.

Q7. Is the balance between passenger and freight appropriate?

The balance is unclear in the report, but clearly both are of vital importance.

There is a notable omission regarding getting mail and parcels back onto rail. Parcels are a rapidly growing area, and rail needs to capitalise on this, and thus remove large numbers of trunk lorries off the road. The Doncaster Royal Mail station should be reopened, and new ones opened in Carlisle and Leeds. *(N.B., Manchester, Liverpool and Preston are served from Warrington, and we think that the Railnet depot at Low Fell near Newcastle has re-opened; if not, it should).* Most such services would run at night, and can be formed of 100mph stock, thus ensuring that the necessary track capacity is available.

There is a clear need for more logistics centres, especially those supplying supermarkets, to be rail connected, and for small container transfer terminals to be sited strategically across the North of England.

Gap analysis

Q8. Are the strategic gaps identified the right ones? (please delete as appropriate) Yes – mostly.

Q9. Are there any strategic gaps missing? Yes:

Re. table 5.1

Section 2.

Sunday services need bringing in line with rest of the week (with the exception of some very early morning services and some peak hour 'extras'). Train services start too late on Sundays – this can vary from mid-morning on most routes to as late as the afternoon (Lincoln-Worksop-Sheffield is an example of the latter). On many routes, there is a poor service pattern on Sundays. Some services do not run at all on Sundays.

In a similar vein, evening services after the peak period are poor on many routes, with the last train being too early for those attending entertainment events and those requiring connections from evening long distance services. This needs correcting.

Some services are skeletal (e.g., Leeds-Goole; York-Pontefract-Sheffield), or sparse (e.g., Middlesbrough - Whitby; Leeds – Morecambe), whilst the Stockport –Stalybridge service is a ‘Parliamentary train’ – this service will be very much needed when TP services serve Victoria. These services should have a full timetable. Some freight only (or nearly only) lines should have (regular) passenger services e.g., the Blyth branch, Clitheroe – Hellifield (Manchester – Carlisle) and Pontefract-Doncaster.

Section 3.

3A. When a station has a very low footfall, the first question to ask and answer is “why”? In some cases, it may be that they serve a small, isolated community, and as a request stop, cause little disruption to services. In other cases, it may be that the service is so poor that people don’t use the train because it is inconvenient e.g. Pontefract Baghill (*two trains each way per day, all off-peak*); the answer here is to improve the service. A third category is one you have identified, namely the station is inconvenient for its catchment area, and you have recognised that a replacement station on a different site may be necessary. Finally, there will be a few stations in areas that have changed so much that there is genuinely little demand, and the future of these stations should be subject to careful scrutiny and consultation; an example of such a station may be (Manchester) Ardwick.

3B. Where trains are cheaper than buses on certain journeys, that’s good. It gets people using the most efficient mode of transport. However, in most cases the opposite is true and train fares are often much more expensive than the bus, with the result that people will use a slower and less comfortable bus to save money; an example is Hebden Bridge to Burnley, where rail fares are very high for the length of journey. You identify this issue in 4B.

Q10. Are there any specific geographic issues which should be highlighted for the longer term?

You are right to stress that there is a wider interest in the strategy beyond the eleven LEPs in the core region. Northern Rail trains run outside the region to Nottingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Buxton, Glossop and Lincoln. Trans-Pennine Express runs to Scotland, and to the south bank of the Humber. These services all benefit the Rail North area as well as the other areas served. Governmental boundaries always create anomalies and there is a strong case for Chesterfield to be seen primarily as a commuting area for Sheffield. We consider that the semi-fast services from Manchester to North Wales may be more appropriately run under the next Northern franchise than the Wales one (but local N Wales services starting at Chester would be part of the Wales franchise), and that this should be evaluated. There is also the issue of the closed

section of the old Midland Railway main line from Manchester to Derby between Buxton and Matlock; the case for re-opening this remains worthy of strong consideration and, although the closed section lies in Derbyshire, it is also of great interest to Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

Outputs & benefits assessment

Q11. Has the right set of outputs been identified to deliver the Strategy objectives?
(please delete as appropriate) No – we broadly agree with this section, but see Q12.

Q12. Are there any other outputs that need to be considered?

- Journey time to/from the ‘second tier’ cities – including Bradford, Nottingham, Hull, York, Huddersfield, Chester, Preston, Stockport.
- All stations on commuter routes should have a minimum of 2 trains an hour in peak periods.
- Sunday services. Sunday is now a busy day. It is the busiest shopping day of the week in Meadowhall, and probably in other shopping centres as well. Sporting fixtures take place, as do concerts. A variety of other leisure activities take place. Services should replicate weekdays, with the exception of fewer trains in the morning peak and possibly other peak extras. Timetables should be enhanced at times when there are clear market needs.
- Reducing road congestion
- Reducing greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution.
- We are concerned by the first sentence in para 7.60 “...including removing some service provision if it is no longer worthwhile or delivering real value”. This is very vague, and could provide an opportunity to close stations or lines. “No longer worthwhile” – are you sure that these services are no longer worthwhile to their users (and to potential users who may be currently deterred by such as an infrequent service, lack of car parking or bus connectivity, or by fare levels). We must not repeat the mistakes of earlier years. Similarly, what does “real value mean? – it is a very vague phrase.

Q13. Is the focus on connectivity to and between key centres, to London and to international gateways right? (please delete as appropriate) ~~Yes~~ No – there are other equally important roles for the railways (see q13). In addition, Leeds Bradford Airport either needs a direct rail connection or a seamless connection to the rail network such as a dedicated shuttle bus meeting all trains at a station on the Harrogate Line – probably Horsforth. A radical solution may be a light rail/tram service from Horsforth to the Airport, and onwards to Otley and Ilkley (or Menston). Your strategy also ignores passenger ferry ports; of those in the north, only Liverpool has a good rail connectivity. Hull, and Newcastle ports are not served by train, and this needs rectifying – most likely by a dedicated railway managed/commissioned coach service connecting ferry arrivals and departures with Paragon and Central stations respectively.

Q14. Are there other priorities?

- Commuting, including from small towns and large villages.
- Connectivity between sub-regional towns e.g., Halifax to Skipton (which Bradford Crossrail would solve); Southport to Huddersfield; Burnley to Sheffield and Doncaster; Hull to York and Newcastle, and between these towns and large towns/cities inside and outside the north of England (e.g., Chester to Leeds; Newcastle to Nottingham).

Q15. How important is electrification? (please delete as appropriate)

Very important, as also are selective doubling and quadrupling, raising track speeds, greatly reducing the length of signal blocks, and inserting passing loops as appropriate. It is also vital that the quality of rolling stock provided after electrification should not be inferior to the diesel stock it replaces. Cascaded stock should be subject to an interior redesign when this is necessary to achieve this objective.

~~Important,~~

~~Not that important~~

~~Not important at all~~

Q16. Should the focus be on better quality of service, irrespective of how trains are powered? (please delete as appropriate) ~~Yes~~ No

Q17. Is there sufficient consideration of freight? No (see our answers to Q4 and Q7).

Implementation

Q18. Is the focus on service categories* right? (HS/IC;IRE;UC;NCmtyLines;+ LRT)

Broadly yes, but:

IRE should include Manchester-Chester-North Wales, currently part of the Wales franchise, and operated usually with high quality class 175 units. It should also embrace Manchester – Sheffield, especially by a much faster service via a reopened Woodhead route.

UC services are not just for commuters; they serve other markets including shopping, entertainment, family visits and connections to longer distance services.

We wonder where the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle route fits into this categorisation. It connects two cities, but attracts many passengers for the scenic ride. It uses rolling stock that is inadequate for the demand. We hope and expect that there will soon be direct services from Manchester (city and airport), either connecting with Leeds services at Hellifield and/or running directly through to Carlisle. The line is underused and should accommodate a direct Nottingham-Glasgow service. Rolling stock should be of inter-city quality, either shortened HSTs or Meridians cascaded from the Midland Main Line following electrification. Line speeds are too low (60mph, yet used to be 80mph) and should be increased. It should be seen as both a community rail line and an IRE line.

Q19. What needs to happen to make this a reality?

- Upgrade track and signalling to enhance capacity and speeds on IRE and UC lines; in most cases, electrify. Insert or reinstate double or quadruple track if appropriate. Insert passing loops to enable express services to pass stopping and freight trains.
- Lengthen trains (without increasing service intervals) to boost capacity.
- Enhance train comfort.

Q20. Is the strategic programme the right one? (please delete as appropriate)Yes - but there are omissions.

Electrification (figure 7.1). Obvious gaps are Halifax-Huddersfield and Halifax-Mirfield (important for diversionary reasons as well as for optimum rolling stock utilisation); Skipton to Gannow Junction (Burnley) once that route is reopened (for the same reasons plus for its potential as a strategic freight route); Thorne Junction-Goole-Gilberdyke (so Sheffield to Hull becomes an

electrified route); the Keswick branch when reopened; and Mirfield to Wakefield Kirkgate. Additionally, if not included in the plans, short connecting lines such as Gascoigne Wood-

Sherburn-Church Fenton, Hambleton North –Hambleton East, and Hambleton West-Hambleton South should be included. The ECML should have diversionary electrified alternatives for the whole route between London and Newcastle. This will involve reopening and electrifying the Leamside Line (Pelaw Junction to Ferryhill and Ferryhill to Norton West) and, beyond the Rail North area, electrifying Peterborough – Lincoln – Doncaster and Ely-Peterborough.

Q21. Are the right issues allocated to the right time periods?

Broadly, yes, but we feel the electrification between Sheffield and South Kirkby Junction, should be brought forward to CP5 as part of the MML electrification project. Similarly, electrification and other improvements to the Harrogate Line, for which a strong business case has just been published, should also happen in CP5.

We also want to see the class 142 and 144 Pacers replaced before 2019, provided this does not reduce the amount of rolling stock available. Clearly, the overall volume of rolling stock in the north needs to be substantially increased.

Q22. Is the balance between passenger and freight in the strategic programme right?

The initiative to transfer significant quantities of inland freight, especially for large retailers and their logistics partners, should be brought forward as early as possible.

Q23. Are the right delivery agencies and potential funders identified? (please delete as appropriate)

Yes / No

Q24. Are there others which should be referenced?

Perhaps contributions should be sought from large employers who would benefit significantly. A useful precedent was set by the former Burnley Building Society in reinstating a (now very heavily used) passenger service over the Copy Pit Line to Bradford. In respect of freight, contributions could be sought from actual or potential users over specific enhancements.

Appendix: Proposed fares regime

Q25. Is the current fares regime fit for purpose? (please delete as appropriate)

No

Q26. What changes could be made to the current fares regime?

- We support smart ticketing, but it needs to have safeguards to stop people being overcharged; paper tickets should still be available.
- The most important thing is to reduce the level of fares. We are very concerned at the suggestion of raising train fares when rail is cheaper than bus – the bus fares should be reduced if they are too high (as in many cases, they are).
- Fare anomalies that penalise the passenger should be removed e.g. the high cost of travelling from West Yorkshire into Greater Manchester, Lancashire and North Yorkshire. Fare anomalies that benefit the passenger should be maintained.
- We support giving full consideration to a zonal scheme, but it needs to be simple and must avoid the anomaly of raising fares for those travelling from the last station in one zone to the nearest station in a neighbouring zone. The best solution to this is for all tickets to cover travel in at least two neighbouring travel zones. Alternatively, station-to-station tickets must remain available when these will be cheaper. We are also concerned that a zonal system could end current good value fares such as those offered by the senior Metro Day Rover in West Yorkshire. Finally, it is very important that tram/LRT/NGT systems are included in the rail zones, and that railcard discounts are applicable.

Any other comments?

Q27. If there are any other comments you wish to make about the Strategy, please enter them below.

STATIONS AS INTEGRATED TRANSPORT HUBS.

This concept should be developed wherever possible, to facilitate the use of the railway for the core part of the journey, by making the end-to-end journey more convenient.

INTERIOR DESIGN.

One area not covered in the draft strategy concerns the ambience of trains. Too much current rolling stock is uncomfortable due to there either being insufficient legroom, or hard or otherwise



unergonomic or uncomfortable seats, or a combination of the two. On all but rolling stock designed and used solely on very short distance commuter routes, the temptation must be resisted to fit in as many seats as possible, as doing so makes for an uncomfortable journey (e.g., Northern Rail's class 150, and 155 units). The solution is longer and/or more frequent trains. It is important that a large proportion (at least 50%) of table seats are available, due to customer preference: our members have observed that the majority of passengers getting onto an empty train head for the tables. This applies especially to families and others travelling together, and also to the large number of middle and long distance commuters and business travellers who work on trains; the ability to do so is why some people use the train to commute. Airline seats should have decent size tables behind the seat in front; no Northern Rail trains have these. The interior of the class 175s used by Arriva Trains Wales should be used as template for middle and long-distance stock. An additional problem on most units is a lack of toilets (the exceptions being 3 car 158s and 185s, and some 2 car 158s (but not the ex WYPTE 158/9s). One toilet is insufficient given how often they are out of order. Adequate cycle space should also be designed-in; what is adequate is to some extent dependent on the stations served on the route.

CAR PARKING

We believe that all stations should have adequate parking at all time so the day to facilitate modal shift. Car parking should be free for rail users. Car park charges deter modal shift if they change the economic balance between using a car for a whole journey, and merely using it to reach a railway station; in this sense, they are counter-productive.

CYCLES

We recognise the good work currently in progress by Northern Rail re cycle availability and storage at stations, and would like to see this rolled out wider.

SAFETY, SECURITY AND ACCESSIBILITY AT STATIONS.

Passengers want to be safe at stations, and cyclists want their cycles to be secure. Staffing is important, and enhanced CCTV is needed at many stations on the network. All stations above a certain footfall (we suggest at least all above 250k pa) should be fully accessible to passengers using wheelchairs or with significant ambulatory difficulties. The footfall should be lower on routes where stations are well spaced out.

GOOD PUBLICITY



There is a lack of good news stories about the railways in the media, and attempts should be made to rectify this through a pro-active media policy.

About you

Finally, we'd like to know a bit more about you.

P1. Please type your postcode: WF8 2BE

P2. If you are completing this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation, please tell us who.

Railfuture

P3. If you would like us to contact you after this consultation ends, please give us your email address or postal address. Please note that we will only use this information in relation to the Long-Term Rail Strategy - it will not be used for any other purpose by Rail North partners, nor will your email address be passed on to third parties.

chris.hyomes@railfuture.org.uk

P4. Rail North would like to publish consultation responses alongside the revised strategy document.

Do you agree to let us include your responses? (please delete as appropriate) Yes

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

The consultation is open until Monday 21 October 2013, with the results published later in the year.