

National Infrastructure Commission
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

please reply to:

Clara Vale
Thibet Road
Sandhurst
Berkshire
GU47 9AR

northernevidence@Infrastructure-Commission.gsi.gov.uk

chris.page@railfuture.org.uk

8th January 2016

Railfuture response to consultation questions on 'Connecting Northern Cities'

Dear Sir,

Railfuture is a national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain, so we welcome the opportunity to provide an informed response to the questions posed by the consultation.

We recognise the importance of the provision of a responsive growing railway in contributing to wider economic, employment and skills, social inclusion and environmental issues.

If you require any more detail or clarification please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

Chris Page

Chris Page
Railfuture
Vice Chairman

**www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk**

Response to National Infrastructure Commission consultation 'Connecting Northern Cities'

1. To what extent are the weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

The economic context for the Northern Powerhouse concept is based on London and its economic success, sustainable only by the provision of improved transport. This is well rehearsed in the business case for Crossrail where the important transport issues, relieving congestion and accommodating growth were only sustainable in business case terms by two additional elements - the agglomeration effect of a single Greater London entity and addressing social inclusion, in this case addressing issues of the supply and affordability of housing and in particular the ability of people to get to work within 45 minutes to service the economy.

Northern Cities in population terms (size and economic value generation) are not large enough individually to replicate the hugely successful London experience yet. If seen collectively as a single economic entity, they are.

A second Powerhouse in the North is preferable to continuing to work on the basis of a single mega centre in London, whilst critically also addressing political, social inclusion, economic and transport issues in this important region.

The transport links in this region are essentially local, lacking in capacity and in investment, although the recent DfT franchise awards have gone some way to alleviating the chronic shortage and obsolescence (not fit for purpose) of rail rolling stock.

The key is the provision of high capacity higher speed infrastructure particularly linking northern cities into a single economic agglomeration, supported by and integrated with more effective local distribution to address the housing issue.

2. What cost effective infrastructure investments in city to city connectivity could address these weaknesses? (All modes)

Investment in road and rail links between Manchester and Leeds and Sheffield is essential in the long term, although in early cost effective terms, improved rail links are likely to be a more cost effective solution to addressing the specific issues addressed in Question 1 as Leeds has a congested and not very resilient motorway and Sheffield, whilst being slightly less important economically, presents the greatest challenge in building a new motorway through the Peak District National Park.

3. Which city to city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

The two dominant city economies are Leeds and Manchester. Liverpool-Manchester has had some rail infrastructure improvements which can be linked into any Leeds scheme but Sheffield has almost nothing of consequence in this economic context (road or rail).

The response takes account of the difficult geography of the region and that Leeds and Sheffield can share new rail infrastructure from Manchester. A new rail link from Manchester to Leeds, with an incrementally justified (as apart from stand alone across the Pennines) link

to Sheffield, linked into existing infrastructure from Liverpool and beyond Leeds and Sheffield is proposed as a cost effective way of addressing the issues addressed in the response to Question 1.

4. What are the key international connectivity needs likely in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are expected?

The London Airport Commission work has demonstrated that high capacity frequent rail links are key to airport expansion whilst addressing environmental issues. Air travel is intermodal by definition so high market shares can be achieved by public transport, as driving to a major airport is not a sustainable solution in planning terms.

Manchester International Airport is the key airport serving the whole area under question (as apart from other city airports served by more local links)

MIA can and should meet this need, irrespective of capacity enhancements in the London area. MIA is well served by rail for people working there (an important consideration when London was studied) and is well served by local links (Metrolink and rail).

MIA is also already served by a good range of national rail links in terms of destinations (Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, potentially Bradford and Newcastle etc). However these are slow and use congested routes. The Northern Hub rail scheme in Manchester addresses this in terms of capacity and distribution in Manchester itself but MIA must be linked into improved links across the Pennines to Leeds and Sheffield (and onward).

In economic terms ports are important with existing rail and road linkages into Liverpool for both intermodal and bulk commodities. The issue here is the same as for personal travel ie capacity particularly between Manchester and Leeds and Sheffield.

The most effective way to meet this need is to consider freight in the provision of new Trans-Pennine capacity. This is unlikely to mean specific new capacity for freight in this context but more particularly by freeing up and allocating capacity on existing routes as a result of investment in a higher speed route from Manchester to Leeds/Sheffield

The second port sector is inland ports, principally Trafford Park, served increasingly by rail from Felixstowe and the Channel Tunnel. The constraint is cross Manchester capacity. Continued growth at Trafford Park is not addressed by the Manchester hub rail proposal and an additional linkage is required to maximise the economic contribution of Trafford Park.

5. What forms of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

The key to success of any infrastructure scheme is a strong well equipped client team managing the interface with delivery bodies. The benefits of such infrastructure plans are in the regions of application and require strong stakeholder and planning support. This is in a devolution context in the north of England.

However in terms of the level of expenditure and the national significance of the Northern Powerhouse, it is suggested that a joint government/ local authority client team is formed on a similar basis to that adopted for the Northern and Trans-Pennine Rail franchises, akin as a project the joint DfT/Treasury/TfL Crossrail delivery client team.