

North west region

National Infrastructure Commission
Finlaison House
15-17 Furnival Street
London EC4A 1AB

By Email : railneedsassessment@nic.gov.uk

29th May 2020

Dear NIC Colleagues,

Telephone: 01524 389 915
andyuille@gmail.com
www.cpre.org.uk

Patron
Her Majesty the Queen
President
Emma Bridgewater

1. I am writing on behalf of the CPRE North West Regional Group, CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester, CPRE Cheshire, and Friends of the Lake District/CPRE Cumbria (hereafter referred to as CPRE NW) in response to the National Infrastructure Commission Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and North consultation. Our response has been prepared with the assistance of rail expert Professor Paul Salveson MBE CILT.
2. In Appendix 1 below the Call for Evidence questions are answered. Our response identifies key issues in the North West. First, to provide essential context, I introduce CPRE NW and our overall recommendations for planning for transport in the future to best protect our countryside and respond to the climate emergency.

We are a part of CPRE, the countryside charity

3. We want a thriving, beautiful countryside rich in nature and playing a crucial role in our nation's response to the climate emergency. We know that engaging with our natural environment, especially near to where we live, is vital for our mental and physical wellbeing. We are determined to promote the countryside and its communities to enable more people than ever before to benefit from it – including those who haven't benefited before.
4. Our vision is for a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives. This ambition has been refined by the many generous, passionate and thoughtful people who have been involved with and supported CPRE through time. In this vision, we look to the future whilst staying rooted in what has inspired us for almost 100 years.
5. We're aiming for a countryside that is valued, enjoyed and understood by, and accessible to, everyone, wherever they live, now and in the future. That's why we describe ourselves as 'the countryside charity'. So, when planning future strategic rail investments for the Midlands and the North we urge the National Infrastructure Commission to ensure the enhancement, promotion and protection of our countryside.

National Transport Infrastructure Rail Investment Priorities

6. CPRE NW welcomes the Government's call for evidence for the Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North. We seek a comprehensive set of rail investments east to west for the Midlands and the North to be prioritised on the basis that they are most economically, socially, and above all environmentally responsible. HS2 Phase 2b is considered by many to be a vanity project, it has many flaws, and poses substantial and significant harms to the environment, so much so it means that CPRE NW cannot support it despite our longstanding campaigning for greater investment in rail and modal shift to rail.

7. Rail has a significant positive contribution to make to a modal shift away from motor-based travel. The the current focus of public investment - in road building, and South to North High Speed Rail - is misguided. Many roads, and elements of HS2 (including station location) have not been robustly justified against alternatives, or internationally binding greenhouse gas emission targets. An example of road building where rail-based alternatives have not been adequately assessed is the dualling of Church Road/A5036 and the construction of a new carriageway through Rimrose Valley, Liverpool City Region. Environmental impacts including loss of land in countryside, loss of green infrastructure including ancient and veteran woodland, loss of critical habitats and damage to biodiversity have not been properly or adequately assessed or given the weight they merit. Combined with the financial cost, weighing the planning balance must be undertaken properly, against anticipated benefits.
8. The Government is to review its standard method for calculating housing requirements; having realised *inter alia* that its flaws lead to promotion of growth in the wrong places. Planning for future rail must accord with stated Government manifesto promises, and consequently support national economic rebalancing to support both the Midlands and the North, while protecting the countryside and responding to the climate emergency.
9. CPRE NW's headline messages to the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) are as follows:
 - I. **Transport is the largest source of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the UK**, at 126 MtCO₂e, accounting for 28% of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 (33% if aviation is included), and it is the only sector in which emissions have increased since 1990. Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) produced in the combustion process are also greenhouse gases and NO_x and particulate matter – PM₁₀s and PM_{2.5}s - are **major contributors to respiratory disorders and cardiovascular diseases**. An increased modal rail share could help address the problem of excessive greenhouse gas emissions, and breaches in air pollution.
 - II. The Committee on Climate Change has stated “This **sector is now significantly off-track** from the cost-effective path of the committee’s fifth carbon budget assessment”. Accordingly, climate change and air quality must be brought into all aspects of transport planning, investment and management. More rail connections and capacity could be key elements of a solution to the problem.
 - III. **Meeting the target by 2045 of net zero emissions by the transport sector will be particularly challenging. It will require a radical plan.** We are of the view (alongside the Committee on Climate Change) that progress will be best achieved if there are a series of intermediate target dates for reductions supported by binding carbon targets and budgets. More rail infrastructure to transport people, and especially freight, is an obvious route to achieving the net zero emission by the transport sector by 2045.
 - IV. The health of England’s rural areas – environment, economy, transport, land use, workforce – is intricately bound up with that of the urban areas. However, rural areas struggle to gain profile under our present systems, where value is often equated with headline economic output. **CPRE supports the call for recognition and strong advocacy of the importance of rural areas at national and local levels** of government. They have a crucial role to play in mitigating and adapting to climate change. More rail investment would support more sustainable transport solutions, and the health of England’s rural places.
 - V. **Rural areas are largely car dependent** and continue to face a toxic mix of declining services and public transport cuts. **A positive plan for rural communities is needed**, acknowledging their special needs and pressures on them, and facilitating sustainable development. Combined with a national programme of provision of high quality, interconnected public transport and the roll out of universal wifi, step by step this should help remove carbon from transport by reducing the need to travel. More rail infrastructure in the future will combat the current, harmful car dependency.
 - VI. To guide investment, **CPRE endorses the transport hierarchy approach** to travel choices which prioritises active travel – walking and cycling, then provision of public transport, particularly rail, and lastly car journeys, mirroring the carbon footprint of the different modes of travel.

- VII. It is clear that the reduction in emissions from road transport that will be needed to meet net zero emissions by 2045 will not be achieved by a switch to electric vehicles alone - **a significant reduction in vehicle miles driven will be needed** too. Road user charging should be developed to replace the revenue from vehicle licences and fuel duty, and designed to reflect the true cost and impact of individual journeys. Drivers would be charged on a per mile basis with the rate varying depending on the distance travelled, the vehicle's emissions, local levels of congestion and the ready availability of **local transport alternatives**. England's rural areas needs a transformational shift from car dependency to rail and other public transport, and this requires an appropriate level of investment.
10. With the above key messages in mind we respond to the NIC Call for evidence questions below. We seek to provide relevant sources of detail, including for connectivity, capacity, greenhouse gas emissions and costs. We support sound planning principles and want to see a future rail network that blends with and makes accessible a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives.

Other material considerations

11. In light of the Climate Emergency CPRE NW urges Government to do all in its power to deliver international commitments on climate change and secure necessary greenhouse gas emission reductions from the transport sector. Rail has a very important role to play for nationwide travel. There should a reduction in domestic flights as rail infrastructure improves intercity connectivity and capacity.
12. The implications of the High Court challenges Case Nos CO/2760/2018, CO/3089/2018, CO/3147/2018 and CO/3149/2018 commonly referred to as the Heathrow Decision need to be fully understood by the NIC in planning investment in rail infrastructure for the Midlands and North.
13. The risks from the Covid-19 pandemic required social distancing to reduce the rate of infection, which involved significant societal behavioural change and reduced travel. The Government daily briefings identified as a key performance indicator the reduction in travel demands. Rail use plummeted by 95%. Travel demand post pandemic may never return to previous levels. Businesses and people may choose to increase the level of homeworking and rely on internet based meetings. In fact, the northern Metro Mayors have called for a rethink and they are urging Government not to return to "business as usual" after the Coronavirus lockdown, but to embrace positive changes the measures have led to, such as the drop in UK air pollution. Andy Burnham, the Greater Manchester Mayor, and Steve Rotheram, the Liverpool City Region Mayor have indicated that building cycling and walking networks in cities and boosting internet connections so that more people could work from home could form part of a strategy to keep some of the benefits that their City-Regions have been experiencing.

In summary

14. CPRE NW calls on the NIC to prioritise rail infrastructure that better supports the prosperity of the Midlands and North and which aligns with our climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, and to plan for a future rail network that promotes a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives, securing economic and social prosperity into the future.
15. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andy Yuille, Acting Chairman, CPRE North West Regional Group

Appendix 1

Call for Evidence Questions and Answers:

1. What potential investments should be in scope of the Commission's assessment of the rail needs of the Midlands and the North?

For the CPRE our most pressing issue for rail development is ensuring our rural communities are better connected, in a sustainable manner, with the local and national rail network as well as with other modes of transport. We argue that the impacts on our countryside through any provision of new infrastructure must be minimised, with a presumption of using existing corridors (including disused rail alignments) rather than costly and destructive 'new build'.

We stress that any investment within the Commission's scope must aim to maximise carbon reduction. Tackling the Climate Emergency is a major issue for CPRE and short-term, narrowly-focused economic growth must no longer deflect from the need to address carbon reduction. Rail is well-placed to meet the challenge of sustainable development but it needs to be done in a strategic way, as part of a national rail plan which aligns with broader sustainable development objectives and detailed regional delivery strategies.

Historically, the needs of rural communities have been neglected by policy-makers. Yet rural England is home to some 11.4 million inhabitants who live and work there. Some areas have become 'transport deserts'.¹ It is of crucial importance as a place of recreation for the country's urban population.² This is likely to become an increasingly important issue as international tourism declines, following the corona-virus pandemic. At the same time, there will be at the very least a serious short-term reduction in public transport usage, after the lockdown is lifted. The big question is how long this will last and which modes will be most affected.³

We make suggestions for investment that we believe are vital, regardless of whether HS2 phase 2b goes ahead and even allowing for a long recovery in public transport use. As we stress above, our prime concerns are with rural England, parts of which experience high car dependency with some towns and villages (particularly in popular tourist areas) experiencing serious traffic congestion. Traffic in rural areas, pre-pandemic, was rising at a rate of over 10% per decade, while in urban areas it has been falling.⁴ Rail in rural areas has experienced a revival, thanks in part to the work of community rail partnerships.⁵ Whilst it is entirely appropriate, from an environmental standpoint, that the use of public transport should

¹ See CPRE and Campaign for Better Transport *Transport Deserts* report, 2020

² Defra *Rural Population and Migration Statistics 2014/5*, updated January 30 2020. See also report by Transport Select Committee on *Passenger Transport Needs in Isolated Communities*, 2014.

³ At this stage it is impossible to accurately predict the long-term impact of the pandemic. Some transport analysts (Steer, Wray and Thrower *Revisiting High-Speed North*, 2020), suggest the economy, and use of public transport, will bounce back quite quickly. Others, e.g. IPSOS-MORI poll (*Local Transport Today* May 1 2020) suggest a strong reluctance to go back to public transport, although this is more likely to be a short-term phenomenon. Consultancy SYSTRA undertook a survey across the UK and found that public transport use could be reduced by 20%, with a bigger 27% reduction in rail commuting. Public transport passengers say they could make fewer trips after the pandemic (*Public transport passengers say they could make fewer trips after the Pandemic*, SYSTRA, April 2020)

⁴ See *The Times* July 5th 2018 'Rural roads busier as drivers escape urban congestion' and Department for Transport *Provisional Road Traffic Estimates October 2016 – September 2017*; Road Safety Observatory note on 'Rural Roads 2016

⁵ See Association of Community Rail Partnerships (now Community Rail Network) *The Value of Community Rail Partnerships*, 2018 and *What use are rural railways? The social, economic and environmental value of rural railways* TR&IN 1997. The contribution of CRPs is specifically endorsed in at a regional level in *Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership Response to Department for Transport/Rail North Consultation: TransPennine Express Rail Franchise and Northern Rail Franchise*, 2015. See also Department for Transport *Community Rail Development Strategy* 2018

be promoted over the use of the private car, it should not be forgotten that transport (of all types) is largely a derived demand. The question has to be asked, will the same need and motivations exist post the coronavirus crisis with expected permanent higher levels of home working?

The point made – that there should no longer be assumptions of exponential demand for more and more transport of all types – there is an unquestionable need for better quality, more reliable and affordable public transport with better inter-connectivity. And the transport needs of rural areas cannot be looked at in isolation. Railways in the North and Midlands are part of a strongly inter-linked network but have suffered historic under-investment.⁶ Improving connectivity to some parts of the regions have major knock-on effects across the rail network.

In looking at potential investments in the North and Midlands it is essential that the NIC recognises the critical importance of ‘the network’ and how investments in particular locations can have greater or lesser impacts across the rail network as a whole. Ironically, a very big part of the solution to the problems of rural connectivity by rail lie in investing in urban capacity at key pinch-points.

This is as much a ‘freight’ issue as a passenger concern. Many parts of rural England, including the North, are major sources of goods and materials, particularly aggregates. Parts of the Yorkshire Dales and Peak District are major originators of rail freight and there is potential for additional traffic. However, the rail network has difficulty in coping with existing freight and some average speeds are absurdly low.⁷ Taking heavy goods traffic off rural roads would be a major step forward in environmental terms and help to ensure the growth of industries which are major sources of rural employment.⁸

The biggest single constraint on rail development in the North-West is congestion in central Manchester, notably the Stockport - Piccadilly – Deansgate Corridor. Unless and until this issue is addressed, many other investments are difficult to justify. For example, enhancements to lines such as Chester – Manchester via Knutsford, or local services on the Hope Valley, are difficult to timetable because of lack of capacity in, and into, Manchester’s Piccadilly station. Improving services from Clitheroe or East Lancashire to Manchester Victoria run up against congestion at Victoria and on the Bolton – Manchester corridor.

We would suggest to the Commission that it considers within its scope investments which:

- Make a significant contribution to improving network capacity
- Make a significant contribution to improving connectivity across and between the regions
- Make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse emissions (including contribution to modal shift)
- Make a significant contribution to reducing social isolation and promoting community cohesion and local regeneration
- Make a significant contribution to regional economic revival post-Covid19
- Make a significant contribution to accessibility even though they may be small scale

In addition, Government and the NIC should ask whether proposed investments:

- Protect the local environment, especially landscape, tranquillity, heritage, habitats and bio-diversity
- Help to tackle the climate emergency and minimise energy needs
- Achieve modal shift rather than generating new journeys
- Integrate with and improve existing services
- Support sustainable spatial planning objectives and regional regeneration⁹

⁶ Transport for the *North Long-Term Rail Strategy*, 2018 and *IPPR Subsidy figures hide under-investment in Northern rail network* August 2015

⁷ See table of average speeds for rail freight on some northern flows, in Steer, Wray and Thrower, *Revisiting Highspeed North 2020*

⁸ See *Cumbria LEP Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2024 Technical Appendices* section 4.2.3

⁹ The main thrust of our suggestions is to achieve a transport system, with rail at its heart, which makes a major contribution to the well-being of the nation: not only economically, but also socially and

In our responses to Questions 2 and 3 we make a number of specific proposals for investments which will meet each of these objectives. We broadly concur with the proposals of RailFuture's North West Branch which has a number of long-standing re-opening projects.¹⁰

We do not accept that 'speed', in isolation, is a desirable policy objective in itself. Nor is this a priority of the travelling public. In survey after survey by Transport Focus and others, public transport users rate reliability higher than a reduction in travel time. The 2017 'Rail passengers' priorities for improvement' survey conducted by Transport Focus ranked price first, the ability to get a seat second and trains arriving on time/reliability third. Reduction in journey time was 11th.¹¹

The way to solve reliability issues (other than having what ought to be taken as a 'given' - reliable signalling and trains with sufficient and well-trained staff) is improved connectivity – and accessibility.

Before Covid-19, rail was undergoing a period of rapid and sustained growth with many services regularly overcrowded, even though average speeds were relatively low and ticket prices were perceived as high. This was despite much rolling stock in the North being of poor quality, though new stock is now being introduced.

A key issue which CPRE argues must be addressed is the current inadequate tools used for transport infrastructure investment appraisal. Far too much emphasis is currently placed on journey time reductions. John Elliot, of the Local Government Technical Advisor's Group, has argued that 'value of time' savings offer little benefit to society in general but only to those individuals driving cars.¹² CPRE would argue strongly for a far greater emphasis being placed on carbon reduction, social and economic regeneration and other measures which both help to address regional imbalances and promote sustainable development following Covid-19.

CPRE supports many of the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals because we support the principle of a modal shift to rail, which is relatively low carbon, but we reserve our opinions with regard to any proposed new lines where the alignments are unknown and the business case has yet to be made. The NPR proposals should not be prioritised over other schemes which we highlight. In addition, we do believe the time is right for major investment in the existing rail system in the North and Midlands in order to rebalance the economy, which has become so London-centric. Any new development should involve full, timely, meaningful consultation with local communities and elected representatives.

Long-term trends – uncertainty lies ahead but investment is urgently needed

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the combined impact of Covid-19 with the Climate Emergency changes everything. Even before the coronavirus, there was a steep upward curve in the percentage of employed people who were working from home for all or part of each week. In the first quarter of 2014, the Office for National Statistics calibrated that the average across the UK was 14%. Figures issued shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown indicated that a quarter of the workforce were sometimes or always working from home and, during the lockdown, the figure is believed to be 60% (<https://www.finder.com/uk/working-from-home-statistics>). The use of teleconferencing during the pandemic has demonstrated not only that a much higher level of home working is possible, but that there is less need for face-to-face meetings. This will have a permanent impact on the number of people seeking to travel.

environmentally. We recognise the wider benefits of shifts from private transport to public transport, including social cohesion, mental health benefits, reduced road accidents, and fewer wildlife casualties.

¹⁰ See Railfuture website North West Branch <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/North+West+Branch>, also Campaign for Better Transport *The Case for Expanding the Network*, 2019

¹¹ <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/rail-passengers-priorities-for-improvement/>

¹² See Landor Links Conference report *A Fresh Look at Transport Appraisal*, 2018; also specifically the paper by Keith Buchan at the same event, *A Professional Advisory Perspective*.

As we argue above, easy assumptions about travel growth need to be re-considered, not only for the next few years but for the next 20-30. Given that rail investment is for the long-term, it is essential that policy takes account of the changed reality and the likelihood that travel demand will be lower than previously anticipated. This particularly applies to HS2, where any remaining business case must surely be in shreds.

Despite supporting more rail investment on the extant system, CPRE has found it difficult to buy into the claimed social and economic benefits of HS2. (In every country where high speed rail has been introduced, it has benefited the capital, not the regions). It is unclear how the power demands for HS2 can be met and the environmental consequences, including noise pollution, are unconscionable. Specifically, as far as the North West is concerned, the strategic case for HS2 Phase 2b lacks robustness. The case made for Phase 2b should be revisited in light of the Climate Emergency, post-Covid19 challenges and against 'The Heathrow Decision'. HS2 Phase 2b has a negative planning balance, when factoring in greenhouse gas emissions, harm to Green Belt and ancient woodland, and the lack of a credible business case (journey time savings no longer stand up to scrutiny and the passenger projections need re-evaluating in the light of expected major reductions in demand following the Covid-19 pandemic).

Nevertheless, there is a need for urgent upgrades to the North's existing rail network to address the problems of historic under-investment, in order to improve connectivity and boost the economy. An urgent programme of rail investment would both support the construction and rail supply sector and provide the basis for future sustainable economic growth. Whilst recognising that much work has been done in the last five years, or is underway, there is much more to do.¹³

We also recognise the importance of prioritisation and a phased approach to investment, accepting that there is a finite limit on resources available – human as well as material. However, we need to boost capacity to some extent through a holistic approach which recognises the importance of training and skills and the creation of a modern railway engineering workforce that can build the railways the nation requires.

The North cannot wait until 2040 to see major improvements. As the authors of the report *Re-visiting High Speed North* argue "the North's rail network is over-loaded, right now. Some solutions may be found in the short-term, perhaps cutting some services so that those that remain can be operated with acceptable levels of reliability. But what comes next? Where is the medium-term plan to address the problems of rail network congestion, already apparent in Manchester but incipient in other major cities where central stations have inadequate capacity?"¹⁴

Achieving a socially and economically balanced nation

London and many parts of the South of the country have seen excessive development in recent decades, despite issues to do with environmental capacity. Investing fairly in the Midlands and North would help the nation to prosper by ensuring all parts of the UK are positive contributors in terms of economic productivity and gross value added. Countryside development pressure would be removed, as large swathes of former industrial and port land, much of it brownfield, is successfully regenerated.

Urban areas of the Midlands and North need revitalisation particularly when it comes to the conventional rail network. Therefore, while we argue that the strategic case, and specific routing and station decisions for HS2 need to be revisited, this must not be used as an excuse to decrease rail funding to the North and Midlands. Funds designated for the current HS2 specification could and should be better spent on other rail investments in the North and Midlands: see below.

Route investment must address station issues

¹³ See Network Rail *Rail Upgrade Plan* and specifically *Great North Rail Project*, which groups major projects in the North under a single banner. Completion of Bolton Corridor electrification in 2019 and four –tracking on Merseyside's City Line were major improvements despite delays to the Bolton Corridor project.

¹⁴ *Revisiting-High Speed North*

The need for modern, accessible and welcoming stations has often been a secondary consideration to route enhancement schemes which have concentrated on track, signalling and other infrastructure. We would argue that any route investment must give the needs of passengers – as well as wider operational benefits – their due consideration. This is likely to be of particular importance post-Pandemic where station design will need to take account of passenger and staff concern over health and safety.¹⁵

We would endorse the view of David Biggs, Network Rail's Head of Property, where he states: *"Our world is changing. As traditional boundaries of space and place blur, increasing urbanisation and new technology is transforming the way we live, work and play. The impact stations large and small can have in this shift is significant, and now more than ever we need to consider the future role of stations as a catalyst for creating healthy and sustainable communities and delivering positive outcomes for passengers. As the definition of what is and isn't part of a station becomes increasingly less relevant, we need to challenge our current perceptions and think beyond the here and now. By provoking debate in the industry about the future role of stations, we can make sure that the decisions we make today unlock future potential and re-imagine stations in a way that has a real and direct impact on the success of people and places. Of course, stations must continue to deliver on their primary purpose, safely and efficiently moving passengers to where they want to go. Yet if we view these strategic assets as more than bricks and mortar, and instead as places for people, places for growth and gateways to our towns and cities, then we will find and explore opportunities that would have previously been beyond our grasp."*¹⁶

The opportunities to re-examine stations, based on the above vision, are immense. Even in many rural areas, the station could become not only a transport hub (with top-class facilities for cyclists as well as bus and taxi access) but also be a community hub for residential, social, business and cultural needs.¹⁷ That said, CPRE would urge caution in respect of giving carte blanche freedoms for development at stations as there are rural stations where it would be inappropriate to do so, many situated in Green Belt and National Parks.

CPRE is aware that, on March 13th this year, the MHCLG secretary of state Robert Jenrick, flagged up thinking by his department in advance of the expected Planning White Paper due for publication later this year (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/robert-jenrick-plans-for-the-future-to-get-britain-building>). The paper *Planning for the Future* included an encouragement to developers to "build upwards and above stations in urban areas" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-the-future>). CPRE would simply take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of retaining the qualification "in urban areas" as appears in that paper (point. No 10, bullet 2, page 5); normal planning criteria to apply elsewhere.

Electrification, Tram-Train and other rolling stock-based initiatives

A move away from diesel traction should be a priority for environmental reasons as well as improved speeds and passenger comfort. Where electrification is not viable, battery, hydrogen or other self-powered vehicles should be invested in for rural lines. Vivarail and others are showing the way but adoption of alternative traction is too slow currently.

Improved connectivity (together with capacity gains in many cases) can be achieved through innovative approaches to rolling stock. The potential for tram-train operation, particularly on parts of the Greater Manchester network and also Blackpool, is significant and could potentially open up new travel opportunities and connect communities much better. However, there does not appear to be a single national standard to facilitate tram-train operation. It is important that this is addressed so that links from some currently 'stand-alone' tramways, e.g. Blackpool, could be developed.

We also note the development of hybrid or 'bi-mode' trains using diesel and electric traction. This delivers some short-term benefits although construction of the trains is more costly and should not be seen as an

¹⁵ *Better Rail Stations*, Chris Green and Peter Hall, 2009, Network Rail/Arup *Tomorrow's Living Station*, issues 1 & 2, 2019

¹⁶ In *Tomorrow's Living Station* Issue 2, October 2019

¹⁷ *Stations as Community Hubs*, paper to DfT Community Rail Steering Group, Paul Salveson & Richard Watts, Oct. 2015)

alternative to full overhead electrification. Using bi-mode trains for short extensions beyond current termini (e.g. on the Merseyrail network) could be a sensible approach.

Promoting rail freight – electrification, more capacity and gauge enhancement

The issue of rail freight is a key concern for CPRE, as we note above. We recognise the huge damage done to rural communities by heavy lorries. There is a need for regional freight strategies which address ways of encouraging more freight by rail, including gauge enhancement (to W12 gauge) on strategic routes. Rail freight benefits enormously from electrification, avoiding costly and time-consuming locomotive changes. As Network Rail's chief executive Andrew Haines said recently: *"One of the key issues is going to be making sure that we have a serious decarbonisation agenda, and that's going to be the biggest game-changer one way or another for freight. We really have to get that nailed."*¹⁸

Network Rail's Freight Development Study (2017) makes a strong case for enhancing gauge clearance to the W12 standard for several routes in the North: *"W12 gauge cleared routes would enable new capability, primarily for short sea intermodal services. The industry aspiration for the gauging of new routes is to, where feasible, deliver W12 capability as the standard gauge requirement. By delivering to W12 in the first instance, this removes the need to upgrade routes at a later date.....The tier 1 W12 aspiration is focused on the links from key short seaports and the Channel Tunnel to a range of freight terminals in the North East, West Midlands and the North West to create a baseline core network. Key routes include: - Transpennine route between Liverpool, Manchester, Wakefield and Leeds. Gauge clearance would act as an enabler for growth from the Port of Liverpool and Tees Dock as part of the Northern Powerhouse. The preferred Transpennine gauge cleared option is via the Diggle route."*¹⁹

We make a number of specific proposals below, based on some key guiding principles for rail investment which prioritise the following projects, which impose the minimum of disturbance to communities, rural as well as urban:

- Lengthening of trains and platforms, electrification, signalling and junction improvements, loading gauge improvements and more passing loops for freight and local passenger trains
- Restoring double track lines where lines have been singled, if traffic justifies it
- reopening disused lines where there are clear benefits and contribute to a 'network' (i.e. rather than dead-end branch lines). Any transport dis-benefits should be made clear to local residents.
- Opening new stations where there is passenger potential, e.g. where development has taken place, or has existing planning permission, particularly housing. We want to see stations serving rural areas developing as hubs for a wide catchment
- Enhancing existing stations to provide better connectivity with local bus networks with better facilities for cycling and pedestrian access
- The consideration of new rail alignments within existing transport corridors but only if revised passenger projections justify them and subject to full environmental appraisals being carried out

2. Which set of rail investments do you believe would, together:

a. best unlock capacity within the Midlands and the North?

The Castlefield Corridor

As noted above, the biggest constraint on capacity within the North (which has knock-on effects across the rail network including to the Midlands and South of England) is the highly-congested double-track corridor between Stockport, Manchester Piccadilly and Deansgate ('The Castlefield Corridor'). Even based on the current timetable, it is next to impossible to run a reliable service due to capacity constraints. There is a need for an urgent medium-term solution to the capacity issues through Manchester which we believe would be

¹⁸ Interview with *RAIL* magazine, May 6th 2020; comments echoed in the same issue by Prof. Andrew Macnaughton ('Time to challenge some sacred philosophies of recent years') who argued for more electrification and freight capacity

¹⁹ Network Rail *Freight Network Study*, 2017

best addressed either by four-tracking and other infrastructure improvements which allow a smoother movement of both passenger and freight services, or by a new east-west tunnel under central Manchester. The proposals from Jim Steer and his colleagues to build a tunnel under central Manchester to address this issue²⁰ need careful consideration and could be funded by diverting funds identified for the unnecessary (and highly unpopular) 'Golborne Spur' and represent much better value for money. Recent press reports suggest that the Secretary of State could abandon the spur, which is expected to cost between £2 and £3 billion.²¹ As well as the Castlefield Corridor, the section from Piccadilly to Stockport, even though it is quadruple track, is heavily congested and needs infrastructure improvements at Slade Lane and Heaton Norris Junctions and comprehensive re-signalling in the Stockport area.

Trans-Pennine Corridor

Whilst CPRE supports much of Northern Powerhouse Rail proposal, it reserves its opinion on a new line between Manchester and Bradford, the alignment for which is unknown. We do however feel that the case for an alternative west-east route using the former Woodhead Tunnel requires consideration. Using this alignment from Manchester Piccadilly via Hadfield and Woodhead Tunnel, with a new line running north-eastwards from Dunford Bridge to Leeds and a line continuing via Penistone into South Yorkshire (either via Stocksbridge or Barnsley) would potentially bring greater benefits than the costly route suggested via Bradford. It would also alleviate capacity constraints on the Hope Valley Line between Manchester and Sheffield.

The existing Trans-Pennine routes require major investment in the short-term.²² These are 'The Standedge Route' (sometimes referred to as 'the Diggle Route') via Stalybridge and Huddersfield, and 'The Calder Valley Route' from Manchester Victoria via Rochdale and Hebden Bridge. Both routes are operating at capacity or near-capacity, neither are electrified and neither can take modern freight container traffic (W12 gauge).²³ Both routes, as well as the very slow link from Todmorden (Hall Royd Junction) to Burnley (Gannow Junction) – The 'Copy Pit Route' – should be electrified with associated capacity improvements to allow more fast and stopping passenger services and freight. The Diggle Route has been identified by Network Rail as 'highest priority' for gauge clearance to W12 standard.

The Copy Pit Route urgently needs track improvements to get increased speeds beyond the current 40 mph (even less on parts of the route).

Liverpool to Manchester

Rail links between the North West's two major cities of Liverpool and Manchester remain inadequate despite electrification of the Chat Moss route via St Helens Junction and Earlestown. We would suggest:

- Electrification and upgrading of the route via Warrington Central and through running of Merseyrail services at least to Warrington; possible link to WCML for freight to Trafford Park (from the south)
- Extension of Liverpool to Kirkby Merseyrail services into Wigan (with a Skelmersdale link both west and east-facing) with either electrification from Kirkby or bi-mode trains
- Infrastructure improvements to enable increased freight traffic to/from the Port of Liverpool via the Bootle Branch and possibly a re-opened North Mersey Branch to Aintree (potentially connecting to both the Ormskirk and Kirkby lines)
- Evaluate re-opening and upgrading as a premier 'fast route' (c 100 mph) between the two cities of the route via Ditton Junction, Fiddlers Ferry and Warrington (Arpley, or 'Bank Quay Low Level') providing additional capacity on other routes and improved connectivity for the Widnes and Lymm areas

West Coast Main Line

²⁰ *Highspeed North Revisited*

²¹ See for example *Manchester Evening News* February 13th 2020

²² See Network Rail *Update on TransPennine Upgrade*, 2019

²³ Transport for the North *Enhanced Freight and Logistics Report* 2018. See also Rail Freight Group paper *Why route freight traffic via Diggle?* 2020 and Network Rail *Freight Network Study*, 2017

With or without HS2 Phase 2b going ahead, there is a need for investment in the West Coast Main Line, particularly north of Crewe to ensure there is capacity to meet existing and long-term future demands. Currently, journey times between Birmingham and Manchester are slow, with major pinch points on both routes (e.g. Stafford, Stone, Stoke and Cheadle Hulme on the main Cross Country route, or also via Crewe). A 'Stafford By-pass' would bring significant benefits to all categories of traffic, with additional capacity created. The success of the Norton Bridge Flyover (north of Stafford) is an example of what can be achieved with the existing network, bringing major capacity benefits and improved journey times.

We support the need to connect HS2 Phase 1/2a onto the WCML (the proposed 'Handsacre Junction') in order to allow classic-compatible trains to reach Macclesfield and Manchester prior to Phase 2b. It would also allow HS2 services to reach Liverpool much earlier than envisaged.

The West Coast Main Line north of Crewe to Preston and Carlisle has a number of pinch-points which constrain the route's capacity (e.g. Weaver Junction, Winwick Junction, Golborne Junction and Euxton Junction) as well as capacity issues in Preston station.

Some parts of the route between Crewe and Preston are double-track, and north of Preston it is entirely double-track with some passing loops, and several locations (Lancaster, north of Oxenholme to Penrith) where there are major speed constraints.

Better use should be made of the Settle-Carlisle Line as a freight corridor, taking pressure off the Carlisle – Preston section. Some long-distance freight could be routed via an upgraded and electrified Farington Junction – Blackburn – Hellifield – Carlisle route, upgraded to W12 gauge.

By addressing these issues, there would be scope for additional services which bring major passenger benefits including a semi-fast Carlisle – Crewe service which could serve new as well as existing stations on the route (e.g. Tebay/Shap, Garstang, Coppull, Golborne). This would also address the current unacceptable position of most trains stopping *either* at Oxenholme or Penrith (not both), limiting connectivity within Cumbria.

North of Carlisle, the Scottish Government (through Transport Scotland) has identified potential capacity improvements in the Clyde Valley that would free up capacity and bring journey time improvements. At the same time, re-opening the former Waverley Line from Carlisle via Hawick to Tweedbank would provide extra capacity for both freight and passenger services.

Cheshire and North Wales

Links from the South, Midlands and North-West to North Wales are important – and currently inadequate. Beyond Crewe, the line is non-electrified with slow line speeds. Working with the Welsh Government, the route beyond Crewe should be electrified and upgraded. This should also include the section from Chester to Warrington, permitting through electric services from North Wales to Manchester.

There is a major gap in the electrified network, completion of which would open up improved capacity and avoiding extensive diesel operation (e.g. London – Holyhead and Manchester – North Wales. Routes should include:

- Crewe – Chester
- Chester – Warrington

The Manchester Airport 'Western Link' should be constructed, providing a new link from the Airport to the Altrincham-Knutsford line, permitting through services e.g. Chester via Knutsford to Manchester Airport and on to Manchester, relieving congestion at and around Stockport.

West Lancashire and the Fylde

Making better use of the existing Liverpool – Ormskirk – Preston route would have some capacity benefits, particularly for freight from Liverpool to the North²⁴, as well as local passenger benefits (see below). The section from Ormskirk to Preston should be electrified and upgraded to double track.²⁵

The line from Kirkham to Blackpool South – single line and diesel operated - has been the ‘poor relation’ of the double-tracked and electrified route to Blackpool North. Yet ironically it probably serves a larger intermediate catchment, i.e. the towns of Lytham and St Annes. The single track, with no passing loops not only limits services to one per hour but has a massive impact on reliability. A major upgrade of the route is necessary, with electrification and a passing loop to allow half-hourly services.

Settle-Carlisle and Skipton - Colne

The Settle-Carlisle Line is an important but neglected asset. Having survived an attempt to close it in the 1980s, the route is thriving, with both passenger and freight traffic. It is an important route for access to the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria, as well as a lifeline for local communities. It has potential to do much more but is constrained by capacity issues. There needs to be a fundamental re-think of the role of the line for both local/regional passenger traffic and freight and longer-distance passenger traffic.

This could involve additional capacity through signalling improvements and passing loops, and also electrification. This would be particularly important if it is to develop as an alternative freight route to the West Coast Main Line (a role it enjoyed in the 1970s). The Blackburn – Clitheroe – Hellifield Line needs urgent infrastructure improvements (track and signalling) to allow more traffic and better journey times, and extending the existing passenger service to Hellifield.²⁶

Re-opening the Skipton – Colne Line would have some freight benefits, potentially allowing heavy freight movements from Swinden Quarry to reach Greater Manchester without taking up capacity through Leeds

Peak District

There are two disused strategic routes within the Peak District National Park which have considerable potential for re-opening, serving different purposes. These are:

- Woodhead (Manchester – Hadfield – Penistone – South Yorkshire)
- Peak Main Line (Manchester – Chinley – Matlock – Derby – East Midlands)

In both cases there is potential for three different traffics – inter-regional and local passenger, and freight, i.e. fast inter-regional passenger services (Liverpool/Manchester – Sheffield and East Yorkshire, and Liverpool – Manchester – Derby – Nottingham/Leicester) and local passenger services providing access to and from rural communities in the Peak District. In the case of both lines there is potential for freight, including traffic originating in the area (e.g. Buxton area quarries) as well as long distance flows e.g. from Liverpool to the east coast.

The existing route between Manchester and Sheffield – the Hope Valley Route – is congested and needs signalling and track upgrades, and electrification. There is significant aggregates traffic originating on the line (from Breedon Cement, Hope. The rail link is at Earle’s Siding) which takes large numbers of lorries off narrow and congested roads; further use of rail should be encouraged with capacity improvements.

To maximise the benefits of investment on the above corridors, upgrades to other parts of the network will be important, particularly electrification of the Midland Main Line north of Kettering/Corby to Derby (linking

²⁴ The new post-Panamax port facility on the Mersey will open up major opportunities for more freight on rail, including flows from Liverpool to Scotland. See Liverpool City Region *Long-Term Rail Strategy*, 2018

²⁵ See Liverpool City Region Combined Authority *Long-Term Rail Strategy*, 2018. If Moss Lane Junction – Lostock Hall was re-instated (about 500m) freight could operate direct from the Port of Liverpool to West Yorkshire and the Settle-Carlisle Line

²⁶ See *Lancashire Telegraph* February 6th 2018 reporting on support from Ribbles Valley Borough Council for extending the passenger service to Hellifield

to the Peak Main Line to Manchester via Matlock), Sheffield and on to Leeds and Manchester via Hope Valley.²⁷

b. best improve connectivity within the Midlands and the North?

The comments and priorities identified above all have potential connectivity benefits, within the North and to other regions, as well as Wales and Scotland. However, some smaller 'local/regional' schemes which may not have such direct impacts on capacity (but have implications for the need for capacity improvements e.g. Castlefield Corridor, Leeds east side) would have significant benefits for connectivity, as well as social and economic regeneration. These include:

West Coast Main Line and rural communities

We highlight above in 2a the potential for new stations on the West Coast Main Line. At present, it runs through, but does not serve, large parts of Cumbria and Lancashire. Improving capacity on the WCML would allow provision of stations at a number of locations which could act as rural hubs, including: Shap or Tebay, Carnforth (new platforms on main lines or a new loop off WCML onto Barrow platforms); Garstang (with new passing loop); Coppull.

The potential for each of these stations to serve a wide catchment area should be stressed, and the need for good quality feeder bus services would be essential, as well as cycling and walking access, moving away from the traditional assumption that stations will only be accessed by car. For example, a station at Garstang could be easily accessed from the centre and surrounding residential areas by flexible demand-responsive taxi, minibus services or cycle. A new service, using electric rolling stock, could run Carlisle to Crewe, offering improved connectivity between existing communities poorly linked (e.g. Penrith and Oxenholme) as well as areas with minimal public transport.

Cheshire and North Wales

There are a number of relatively small interventions that could be made to improve the rail network serving an area of considerable growth.

- Re-introduction of passenger services on the Sandbach to Northwich line would serve the growing town of Middlewich (new station) and new development in the Northwich area (new station at Gadsbrook Park). It would also provide connectivity from the Knutsford area and Northwich itself to main line train services at Crewe.
- Extending Merseyrail services from Ellesmere Port to Helsby would offer greater connectivity to Warrington – North Wales services from the Wirral and Ellesmere Port
- A station between Crewe and Chester, ideally Beeston Castle & Tarporley would act as a hub for a large swathe of rural Cheshire.
- A Manchester Airport 'Western Link' would provide links from the Airport to Chester and North Wales

Cumbria and the Lake District (other than WCML)

Re-opening of the route from Penrith to Keswick would be a major boost for connectivity in the North Lakes and help reduce traffic congestion. As a long-term aspiration, it should continue westward to Cockermouth and Workington, providing West Cumbria, an area suffering from high levels of deprivation) a much improved link to the West Coast Main Line and journeys to the South.

The Cumbrian Coast Line is slow, with capacity constraints due to its low speeds and some sections of single-track. This needs addressing by line-speed improvements and additional track capacity to make the entire route double track. There is a case to look at electrifying the route from Barrow to Carnforth, as well as the Windermere Line (which also needs a passing loop to improve frequencies to half-hourly).

²⁷ Electrification north of Bedford to Kettering and Corby is underway and should reach Sheffield by 2023. Clearly to get full benefit of the investment it should continue further north. See Network Rail *Midland Main Line Upgrade* and *Railway Technology Magazine* 'Midland Main Line (MML) Upgrade' 2020

The Cumbrian Coast has developed an 'Energy Coast' brand which highlights the ironic situation of a long stretch of line (Barrow to Carlisle) continuing with diesel traction.²⁸ Given the route's relatively self-contained nature it would make an ideal candidate for a pilot project to test out different solutions instead of diesel traction.

Merseyside and links to West Lancashire

West Lancashire includes small but growing villages and significant larger communities, with poor rail connections. Skelmersdale, a new town built in the 1960s, has never had a direct link and urgently needs one, providing much-needed connectivity to Liverpool and beyond.

The currently 'split' route from Liverpool to Ormskirk (electric 3rd rail) and then Ormskirk to Preston (diesel) needs a major upgrade with north and south-facing curves at Burscough to provide a direct link from Preston to Southport, with some Liverpool – Ormskirk trains continuing via Burscough to Southport. If the short section of line from the former Moss Lane Junction (between Midge Hall and Preston) to west of Lostock Hall (joining the line from Preston to Lostock Hall and Blackburn) was re-instated, this would allow freight traffic from the Port of Liverpool to access West Yorkshire and also run to Scotland via Blackburn and Hellifield.

The same issue applies with Liverpool – Kirkby – Wigan. The integrity of the route needs to be re-established with through trains from Liverpool via Kirkby/Skelmersdale to Wigan and beyond to Manchester using bi-mode trains (for 3rd rail and overhead electrification).

Exactly the same pertains to Bidston – Wrexham. The route should be electrified (in partnership with Welsh Government) to allow through trains from the Merseyrail network to Wrexham.²⁹

Lancashire

Proposals to re-open the Poulton-le-Fylde to Fleetwood line have received considerable publicity and we fully support the creation of a fixed rail link, whether light or heavy rail.³⁰ Fleetwood is a major town with a population of 25,939³¹ and is in need of economic regeneration. Thornton, which the railway would serve, is a large suburb of Blackpool dependent on using trains from Poulton-le-Fylde, where there are minimal parking facilities at the station. Like any other re-opening, unless there are compelling reasons why not, the route should be electrified, if heavy rail is opted for.

A Fylde (Blackpool or Fleetwood) - Bradford service via Preston, Burnley, Colne and Skipton would serve and connect many communities which currently have inadequate transport. At the same time, it would provide a convenient and attractive link from the large towns of East Lancashire (Burnley, Nelson, Colne) with Skipton, Keighley, Bradford and Leeds. If better bus links were developed, an improved rail service to North-east Lancashire could provide the core of an integrated rural transport service covering Burnley, the Ribble Valley, Pendle and Hyndburn.

We have already highlighted the case for re-opening Colne – Skipton, which would offer some capacity benefits for freight. Its main benefit would be to improve local and inter-regional connectivity. Currently, the service from Preston to Colne is single-track from Gannow Junction (west of Burnley) to Burnley Central, Brierfield, Nelson and Colne. These are all substantial communities which suffer from serious economic problems, in part caused, or certainly reinforced, by geographical isolation.

Re-opening the 10 mile section of line from Colne to Skipton, with double-track and full electrification, would allow through running from west/central Lancashire into North and West Yorkshire.³² New stations at

²⁸ *Britain's Energy Coast – A Master Plan for West Cumbria*, 2008

²⁹ See Network Rail: *Liverpool City Region Strategic Rail Study –Long Term Planning Process* October 2016 and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority *Long-Term Rail Plan*, 2018

³⁰ At this stage, options should be examined including extension of the Blackpool tram network beyond Fleetwood to serve Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. The ideal option could well be a tram-train solution allowing tram-trains to run into Preston, with a loop formed with the Kirkham – Blackpool South line.

³¹ Based on 2011 census figures. This figure represented a drop of over 3% since the previous census, reflecting the town's economic decline

³² See SELRAP *The Campaign to Re-open the Skipton – Colne Line At a Glance*, 2019

Foulridge, Earby and Thornton-in-Craven would be a huge boost for rural communities, with a connecting bus from Earby to Barnoldswick.

The single-line route from Kirkham to Blackpool South has long been a poor relation of the Blackpool North line but serves large communities along the coast including Lytham, St Annes and the south side of Blackpool. It should be electrified with a passing loop to allow half-hourly frequencies. This route has considerable potential for 'tram train' operation but we acknowledge current incompatibility of the Blackpool tram infrastructure/trams and the Network Rail system, as we note in our introduction.³³

The Manchester – Clitheroe service should be extended (on the existing freight-only line) to Hellifield, with stations at Chatburn and Gisburn, providing improved connectivity for rural communities. This would require re-instatement of the bay platform at Hellifield.

The re-instatement of passenger services to Clitheroe has been a major success but the route needs an additional hourly service linking to Preston. Accessing the Trough of Bowland by connecting bus services at Clitheroe should form part of a wider access strategy for this popular area which has very poor public transport links.

Some services could continue to Carlisle (and/or possibly Hawes) via Settle. There is considerable unmet demand for leisure travel on this corridor, particularly walkers in the Greater Manchester and Blackburn areas wishing to get to the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria.

The route from Preston to West Yorkshire via Accrington and Burnley Manchester Road is well-used and there is a strong case for more frequent and better quality services, based on a Blackpool North – York service pattern. As part of a regional electrification programme which would include Preston – Colne – Skipton, the section from Gannow Junction to Hall Royd Junction (Todmorden) should be upgraded and electrified, with a station serving the upper Cliviger Valley.

Greater Manchester

The Greater Manchester conurbation, with a population of three million, has had some major rail investment in recent years, including the long-delayed electrification of the Bolton corridor.³⁴ However, there are major gaps which need addressing for 'conventional' overhead electrification. They include:

- Bolton – Wigan (with new Wigan platforms at Lostock)
- Manchester Victoria – Stalybridge and Guide Bridge – Stalybridge – Leeds
- Manchester – Liverpool via Warrington Central
- Manchester – Sheffield via Hope Valley (including Hyde Loop and Rosehill Marple, but see below)
- Greater use of bi-mode vehicles would allow greater use of the electrified network for parts of some journeys, e.g.
- Manchester – Bolton – Clitheroe – Hellifield

There is considerable potential for tram-train operation using the Manchester Metrolink system. Britain has been very slow in harnessing the benefits of tram-train operation, though the mode is now in operation in South Yorkshire. Learning from that experience, Greater Manchester is exploring a number of options which we support. These include:

- Manchester – Wigan via Atherton (with possible branch to Bolton via Walkden and Bolton Royal Hospital)
- Manchester – Rosehill Marple via Hyde Loop

We also support the idea of connecting the Metrolink with the heavy rail system at Altrincham (where they sit alongside each other), an idea that was first mooted 20 years ago during the MIDMAN multi-modal study.

³³ We welcome the announcement that funding is to be made available from The Transforming Cities Fund for a new station at Cottam between Kirkham and Preston (March 11th 2020, *Lancashire Post*). However, it is only one part of the wider picture and improved capacity on the Blackpool South line remains pressing to allow greater connectivity between the South Fylde and Preston.

³⁴ See Transport for Greater Manchester *Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, Draft Delivery Plan 2020-2025*, 2019

Dales and North Lancashire

Improvements to the Settle-Carlisle Line (see 2a) would enable more frequent services allowing both tourists to come in and local people to work or play in the larger towns of Carlisle, Skipton, Bradford and Leeds. Re-opening the short branch line from Garsdale to Hawes would have a major impact on connectivity in the Dales. An hourly service from Hawes to Skipton would improve local connectivity and provide connections with the Aire Valley (and to Lancashire at Hellifield).

Peak District

Re-opening of either or both Woodhead or Peak Main Lines (they are not in competition, they serve different markets) would do much to improve inter-regional connectivity (North West – South Yorkshire and North West - East Midlands). At the same time they would provide much-improved connectivity for rural communities in the Peak District and encourage some of the large numbers of car-borne tourists to use public transport. This would involve some new stations to act as ‘rural hubs’ – Dunford Bridge and Stocksbridge on the Woodhead Line and Millers Dale, Bakewell and Rowsley on the Peak route.

Small-scale access improvements

Across the North and Midlands many stations have inadequate access, often with platforms only accessible by footbridges. This makes many stations out of bounds for many passengers with mobility problems as well as for people with prams and heavy luggage. In Lancashire alone there are major access problems to Burnley Manchester Road, Rose Grove, Accrington, Mill Hill, Layton and elsewhere. In addition, stations should be made dementia-friendly based on the highly successful schemes trialled on the Bentham and Clitheroe lines.

3. Within the set of investments you identified, which individual investment(s) should be the highest priority?

1. Resolving the issue of capacity between Deansgate, Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport should be the top priority, freeing up capacity to allow a range of other investments.
 2. Investing in all three Trans-Pennine routes (Calder Valley, Stanedge and Hope Valley) with additional capacity and electrification
 3. Addressing freight bottlenecks across the region, particularly on routes providing access to the Port of Liverpool
 4. In-fill electrification schemes including Bolton – Wigan and Manchester – Stalybridge, Kirkham – Blackpool South
 5. Re-opening Skipton – Colne with full electrification to Preston
 6. New link to Skelmersdale from Kirkby – Wigan Line
 7. Re-opening both Burscough Curves
 8. A strategic programme of station re-openings which are well served by bus connections
 9. Extend Merseyrail network to Preston/Southport, Wigan and Wrexham
 10. Re-opening of Woodhead and Peak Routes
 11. Manchester Airport Western Link to gain access to Mid-Cheshire Line
 12. Capacity improvements and new ‘hub’ stations along West Coast Main Line north of Crewe
- **Please explain your rationale for this and how this would affect the phasing and sequencing of the full set of investments you identified.**

We want to prioritise schemes which have the widest benefits in terms of both capacity and connectivity and are quickly deliverable. Hence the Castlefield Corridor stands out as it unlocks a wide range of opportunities across the North’s rail network.

In terms of our Priority 2, east-west links across the North have been historically weak yet the routes connect large conurbations as well as smaller but growing rural communities.

Freight is a key issue for the North-West. The importance of substantial investment to open up better rail access to the Port of Liverpool has been recognised by the city region³⁵. Improving this link would do away with the need for Highways England's scheme for an off-line improvement to the A5036 through Green Belt.

In-fill electrification schemes (4) are relatively 'quick wins', provide improved passenger comfort (and speed), release rolling stock for other duties and improves connectivity through journey times and reliability.

A rolling programme of re-openings (5) on routes which would significantly enhance the region's rail network would also bring regeneration benefits and some capacity benefits. A direct link to Skelmersdale (from both the Liverpool and Wigan directions) would provide vastly improved connectivity to a town of some 40,000 people. Re-opening both Burscough Curves (7) would bring major improvements to connectivity across West Lancashire with improved connections from Southport to Preston as well as North Liverpool and Sefton to Preston.

Station re-openings (7) offer good economic and social value in areas that may have experienced major development and/or have traffic problems. We would prioritise locations situated some distance from major centres so that they do not impact on local bus travel and are well served by connecting bus services

Extension of the Merseyrail network (9) beyond its current boundaries³⁶, linked to Burscough Curves re-opening in relation to Liverpool – Ormskirk – Preston, would bring huge connectivity benefits to communities along the 'peripheral' routes which have suffered unattractive, poor quality services for decades. It should not be a hugely expensive project.

Re-opening of the Woodhead and Peak routes (10) are longer-term projects but both bring significant benefits in terms of improved network capacity (passenger and freight) and connectivity – both inter-regional and local.

Improved links from Liverpool to Manchester (11) would bring major connectivity improvements as well as providing capacity enhancements particularly for freight from Garston/Ditton.

The WCML (12) suffers from low speeds and several pinch-points which inhibit provision of more services. Investment in the route would have very wide benefits to both regional and national connectivity.

What supporting policies need to be in place to deliver the benefits of the investments you identified? If there are any dependencies with other investments/policies, how confident are you that these supporting policies will be put in place?

To guide investment, CPRE urges the Government to enshrine a national planning policy and NIC investment strategy that endorses the transport hierarchy approach to travel choices which prioritises active travel – walking and cycling, then provision of public transport, particularly rail, and lastly car journeys, mirroring the carbon footprint of the different modes of travel. We look forward to the Government's *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands* addressing these issues.³⁷

Currently, decision-making on rail in England is unsatisfactory. Investment should be based on the priorities we have identified above and form part of a national framework for rail development, reflecting proposals (as we understand) that are contained in the Williams Review for the creation of a strategic 'guiding mind'

³⁵ "In terms of freight, our biggest challenge, particularly in the context of our future outside the EU, is improving connectivity to our £400m post-Panamax port at Liverpool 2. Promoting modal shift to rail is likely to provide the most sustainable option for moving up to 13,500 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) each vessel can carry. This Strategy therefore identifies the need to upgrade the Bootle Branch Line to connect in to enhanced west-east and north-south lines. I am pleased to endorse the contents of this Strategy." Steve Rotheram, in Mayor's foreword to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority *Long-Term Rail Strategy* 2018

³⁶ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority *Long-Term Rail Strategy* 2018

³⁷ See *Terms of reference for an integrated rail plan for the North and Midlands*, DfT, February 2020

for rail.³⁸ However, there needs to be regional strategies that are developed with wide input from the rail industry, local authorities, businesses, environmental non-governmental organisations, communities and rail and amenity groups. Whilst we applaud the broad-brush policies in Transport for the North's there is a need for a specifically *North-West Long-Term Rail Strategy* that integrates the very detailed and well-grounded outputs identified in Liverpool City Region's *Long-Term Rail Strategy*, for example.

There needs to be much clearer understanding of the respective roles of key agencies charged with *delivering* rail investment, including central government (DfT), Network Rail and train operators who have an understanding of both pressures and opportunities for the rail network.

Current investment appraisal tools (COBA) sway decision-making away from sustainable choices. They need to be revised, with much greater weight given to social and economic factors and environmental issues, with less emphasis on small time savings and with a recognition that time spent on trains is not wasted but can be used for working or relaxing.

We support rail as an alternative to damaging road and air travel. However, proposals for completely new high speed lines, put forward as a means of relieving pressures on the existing system, tend to be in new transport corridors and present many challenges for the countryside and rural communities.

We welcome initiatives that will improve rail services and unlock bottlenecks on a strategic level. Likewise, we support Community Rail Partnerships and local groups working to improve station facilities. We want to see priority for rail investment and better integration with other modes (along with active travel) to support sustainable development.

We support improvements for rail freight, including upgrading to continental gauge where necessary (e.g Trans-Pennine routes) and restoration of grants to develop local depot facilities.

Transport decision-making in the UK is increasingly devolved, which we welcome, but there needs to be a clear understanding of where ultimate responsibility lies. Within England, the DfT should set over-arching policy and a framework for rail transport investment appraisal which recognises that rail travel is a passive activity. City region combined authorities, LEPs and county or unitary authorities should offer detailed strategic plans, as Manchester and Liverpool CAs and Cheshire and Warrington LEP already have.³⁹

4. What impact would the investments you identified have on greenhouse gas emissions? In particular, how would they affect the UK's ability to meet its domestic and international targets, including the Paris Agreement and net-zero?

The impact these proposals above (response to Q 2a and 2b) would help enormously, particularly if coupled with proposals being developed by Transport for the North, the combined authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, counties, districts and unitaries – all of which have declared a climate emergency. Combined together in a strong regional plan they would reduce the transport sector's overall greenhouse gas emission and they would provide an alternative to domestic flights as well as car and lorry.

- **In answering this question, it would be helpful if you could consider the expected decarbonisation of road transport, as set out in the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) National Infrastructure Assessment and Freight Study.**

³⁸ Publication of the review has been delayed because of corona-virus issues and is thought to now take the form of a Government White Paper (see *Railway Gazette International* 'Williams Review to lead to legislation as franchising 'not the way forward' January 22 2020)

³⁹ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Long-Term Rail Plan 2018; Transport for Greater Manchester; Cheshire and Warrington LEP 2017 *Strategic Economic Plan* and *Cheshire and Warrington Matters: A Transport Strategy to Support the 2017 SEP*; Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership *Response to Department for Transport/Rail North Consultation: TransPennine Express Rail Franchise and Northern Rail Franchise*, 2016 and Lancashire County Council

CPRE considers that road transport cannot be made sufficiently decarbonised to meet greenhouse gas emission targets through the use of electric vehicles alone. The problem of air and noise pollution needs also to be addressed.

5. In addition to greenhouse gas emissions, what are the potential environmental effects (positive and negative) of the investments you identified?

Our proposals (above) together with other strategies we have identified by regional agencies (including Northern Powerhouse Rail) would free capacity on the most congested parts of the existing network and achieve a significant modal shift from air and road to rail. However they could also cause serious damage to the countryside. We will want to be satisfied that they provide value for money. In addition to the sequential approach above, we urge policy-makers to apply the following tests to specific proposals. Do they:

- Protect the local environment, especially landscape, tranquillity, heritage and habitats?
- Help to tackle climate change and minimise energy needs?
- Achieve modal shift rather than generating new journeys?
- Integrate with and improve existing services?
- Support sustainable planning policies and regional regeneration?

6. Aside from those delivered by improved connectivity and greater capacity, what broader impacts on people's quality of life could the investments you identified have?

Our proposals in this document would provide much-improved connectivity within rural communities across England as well as strengthened links to urban conurbations. We cannot continue with a 'do very little' approach which takes as given the huge influx of car-borne tourists into areas such as the Peak District National Park, the Lake District, the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales. In many rural areas 'transport poverty' is a major social problem due to people being forced to run a car (or more than one) because of the lack of public transport. Developing stations as rural hubs with good quality bus connections and cycleways would lessen car dependence and contribute to reduced emissions.

Currently, there is inequality in the level of rail infrastructure and service between the North and South which impacts on people's quality of life and ability to access both employment and leisure opportunities. The Government's manifesto includes reference to rebalancing the economy stating "*.....it ..means making sure that we share prosperity across the country, addressing the longstanding economic challenges in parts of the country. We will invest responsibly and prudently in the infrastructure that can make a difference, and ensure communities in every corner of the United Kingdom are pleasant, safe and prosperous.*"⁴⁰

7. How would the costs and benefits of the investments you identified be distributed economically, socially and geographically?

CPRE welcomes policies and funding commitment to rebalance the economy. Generally, there are more deprived areas in the Midlands and North when compared to the south, and this means people have poorer health and death rates are higher. There is a growing recognition that measures to address current imbalances within the UK are matters of great urgency and will not go away following the end of the current lockdown. If anything, the need to invest much more heavily in the North and Midlands will have increased, given the regions' reliance on manufacturing, which have been badly hit compared with London and the South-East which is more reliant on services.⁴¹

• Which set of investments would best improve rail connectivity with Scotland? If these are different to the investments you identified above, please explain why.

The existing West Coast main Line north of Preston (see Q 2), could be substantially improved to enable faster journey times overall from the North and Midlands to Scotland. The Settle-Carlisle Line, if upgraded,

⁴⁰ *Get Brexit Done, Unleash Britain's Potential*, Conservative Party Manifesto, p. 25 2018

⁴¹ See, for example, UK2070 report *An Inquiry into Regional Inequalities Towards a Framework For Action*, chaired by Sir Robert Kerslake, 2019

has the potential to handle more freight traffic from south of Preston, if routed via Blackburn and Hellifield. This would free up capacity on the WCML. North of Carlisle, re-opening the Waverley route from Carlisle to Edinburgh via Hawick to Tweedbank, using the re-opened section north thereof, would provide additional journey opportunities to and from the Scottish Borders, create more capacity for freight and a diversionary route to the east coast of Scotland.⁴²

CPRE considers that if HS2 were extended to Scotland it could create a two tier rail service, with large parts of North Lancashire and Cumbria being marginalised. Friends of the Lake District (which also represents CPRE in Cumbria) is concerned about high ticket prices and that investment in traditional rail would be reduced, as investment is concentrated on HS2. Wigan and Warrington would both be likely to have a lower level of services to Scotland than is currently the case. CPRE recommends that improvements to existing north-south traditional rail services would be the best way to improve rail connectivity with Scotland and the rest of the country. The proposed 'Golborne Spur' should be abandoned with an announcement to this effect being made quickly to avoid blight and unnecessary community concerns.

What would be the impact of the investments you identified on connectivity between the Midlands and the North, and other parts of the UK? Please explain where and how impacts would occur.

CPRE recommends that improvements to existing traditional rail services and infrastructure would be the best way to improve rail connectivity between the Midlands and the North, and the rest of the country. Addressing infrastructure issues in the Stafford area, with possible construction of a Stafford By-Pass, would improve connectivity between the Midlands and the North (and Scotland). The very slow (and congested) junction at Stone between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent, should be addressed as a longer-term project with a fast, grade-separated junction considered.

Re-opening of the Peak Route via Chinley and Matlock would represent a massive improvement to connectivity between the North West and East Midlands, allowing through services from Manchester via Matlock to Derby, Nottingham/Leicester and beyond to Bedford and London.

- **What would be the impact of the investments you identified on international connectivity across the Midlands and the North? Please consider the impact on both ports and airports**

The North-West has poor rail links with continental Europe, with most passengers travelling via Eurostar with a change in London. HS2 in whatever form will do nothing to improve this. Whilst CPRE does not wish to encourage environmentally-polluting air travel, we recognise that rail links to regional airports, Manchester and Liverpool particularly, are important. Constructing a new rail link north from Manchester Airport to join the Mid-Cheshire (Chester – Stockport) route would bring passenger benefits through better links to the Airport from Cheshire as well as capacity improvements at the Airport station itself, avoiding reversal.

The last remaining port directly served by rail passenger services is Heysham, with one train daily; this should be improved. The current operating arrangements are archaic and slow. The North Wales Coast Line should be upgraded and electrified, improving links to Holyhead and the Republic of Ireland.

The main issue regarding port access for the North West region as a whole is Liverpool. The Port of Liverpool has expanded rapidly and rail traffic is growing.⁴³ However, it is constrained by infrastructure bottlenecks, including the Bootle Branch itself and along the Chat Moss line to Earlestown. It has been estimated by The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority that there needs to be three hourly paths (both directions) for freight to Mersey Docks, as far as Earlestown (where one train would run south via Winwick Junction, one continuing east over the Pennines and the third serving Trafford Park). The gauge restrictions in Standedge Tunnel (and elsewhere) limit freight development and a strategic approach should be taken which includes upgrades and gauge enhancement to W12 loading gauge on key freight corridors.

There is rail access to Workington and Barrow Docks. A rail freight study of the Cumbrian Coast would be a helpful initiative, as part of a wider route plan for the line, taking a holistic view of obstacles and potential for freight along this route, including nuclear traffic.

⁴² See 'Borders Railway, Time for the Next Step' Graeme Pickering, *RAIL*, May 6th 2020