

HARROGATE LINE SUPPORTERS GROUP - NEWS BULLETIN No. 11

There is currently a lot of work being planned to upgrade rail services across the North of England in general and on the Harrogate Line in particular. This Bulletin highlights key projects affecting Harrogate District that are currently in the public domain. Some others are still under wraps.

1. RAIL IN THE NORTH = RAIL NORTH

Plans for the partial devolution of rail services in the North of England are progressing well and the proposed governance arrangements to establish Rail North together with a new partnership with the Department for Transport (DfT) have been published, the initial proposals. The vision of Rail North is that sustainable economic growth will be supported by improving connectivity within the North and from it to other parts of the country. See www.railnorth.org

1.1 What is 'Rail in the North?'

Rail in the north of England comprises a network of routes allowing rail travel across the north as well as to and from the rest of Great Britain. The routes include:

- north – south routes such as the East Coast, Midland and West Coast Main Lines which provide links to London and Birmingham and Wales;
- east – west routes link the North West with Yorkshire & Humber and the North East including the Tyne Valley, Settle and Carlisle, Bentham (Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe), Caldervale, North Transpennine (Huddersfield) and South Transpennine (Sheffield) lines, in addition to the route from Manchester to North Wales; and
- several important intra-regional (e.g. Leeds – Nottingham), rural (e.g. Carlisle – Barrow) and suburban (e.g. Marple to Manchester) rail routes.

Including the entire area there are **682 stations** (27% of the UK total). Excluding the LEPs areas of Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire, Greater Lincolnshire and Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire, the total is **534 stations** (21% of the UK total).

1.2 Rail North = Transport Authorities working together

An outline governance structure for Rail North to manage the new Northern and Transpennine franchises only has now been published. The proposed governance structure has the following key features:

- An Association of Local Transport Authorities known as the Association of Rail North Partner Authorities (ARNPA), with a member from each of the of 30 LTAs in the North, and governed by a Leaders' committee (LC);
- Rail North Limited (RNL), a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) being a company limited by guarantee, whose Directors are appointed by geographical sub-groups determined by ARNPL; and
- A Joint Venture (JV) body or partnership established under arrangements between Department for Transport (DfT) and Rail North Limited to manage the new Northern and Transpennine Express Franchises.

The Association through the Leaders Committee (LC) would have the following functions:-

- to promote and improve rail services in the Rail North area
- to campaign for devolution of responsibility for the Northern and TPE franchises
- to develop and approve, and oversee the implementation of, a long-term Rail Strategy.
- to establish regional sub-groups as provided for below
- to provide political leadership and oversight of RNL

The LC will establish a number of geographical sub-groups of LTAs, whose function would be to appoint a person to serve as a director of the Board of RNL. In determining the composition of the sub-groups, account will be taken of factors such as:

- local Authority, LEP and LTB linkages
- the geography of the rail network
- the need to ensure inclusivity and representation across the North.

The shadow LC has agreed initially to establish the following eleven sub-groups:

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GCMA)
- West Yorkshire (plus York)
- South Yorkshire
- Merseyside (including Halton)
- North East (Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland)

- Lancashire and Cumbria (including Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen)
- Tees Valley (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees)
- **North Yorkshire (- including most of the Harrogate Line)**
- Humberside (East Riding, Hull, North Lincs, North East Lincs)
- Cheshire & the Potteries
- East Midlands (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire)

NYCC County Councillor Chris Metcalfe is the North Yorkshire representative on the Leaders Board. John Laking, NYCC Policy Development Manager Integrated Transport is a member of the Steering Group; Graham North, Policy Support Officer (Rail) is a member of the Management Group & Franchise Specification Task Group.

1.3 Rail North + DfT Partnership

In November 2013 the Secretary of State for Transport confirmed his support for the principle of devolution with DfT taking a role within an initial partnership structure to help manage the risks associated with a project of this scale. The approach will be based on the proposals that have been developed by Rail North over the past year and which include a long term rail strategy for the North of England, a wide ranging business case, and a structure for decision-making in the North.

A shared set of principles has been agreed to underpin this Partnership. These acknowledge the importance of growing the railway to maximise the benefits of infrastructure investment and linking this to railway efficiencies and having a platform for determining investment priorities within the Partnership. The Secretary of State has welcomed the principle of risk and reward sharing between members of the Partnership. Further work will be needed in this complex area but it is agreed that the Partnership should be structured to allow the balance of risk to change over time.

The DfT-Rail North Partnership will cover the re-franchised Northern and TransPennine services. The parties intend to agree detailed arrangements to ensure that the franchises will be jointly designed and managed by the Partnership, with DfT running the procurement processes to a common timetable. The competition is due to begin in 2015 with new franchisees being in place by February 2016.

The Rail North strategy for devolution of rail franchising can be seen on their web site:

<http://www.railnorth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/20131110-Devolution-of-Rail-Franchising.pdf>

1.4. The Rail in the North All Party Parliamentary Group

The Rail in the North All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is a cross-party group of MPs who regularly meet to take evidence from industry and users to promote improvements to the service. Andrew Jones MP for Harrogate & Knaresborough has been re-elected Vice Chair.

2. NORTHERN & TRANS-PENNINE FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

Consultation on the new Northern and TransPennine Express rail franchises specifications, which will begin in February 2016, is now underway. The consultation aims to:

- inform the planned process and timescales for awarding the TPE and Northern franchises
- provide background information on current services and the context of the new franchises
- guide stakeholders and potential funders of the objectives and expectations for the franchises
- discuss the requirements in the Rail Executive's base case specifications and options considered
- invite potential funders to notify Rail Executive of any changes

The consultation looks at how infrastructure improvements, such as electrification and completion of the Northern Hub schemes, will impact on services, frequencies and destinations. It will also examine how to tackle crowding and meet future passenger demand, deliver a more efficient network, and improve customer services and passenger satisfaction. The full 86 page consultation document is at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-northern-and-transpennine-express-rail-franchises>

The consultation period began on 9 June 2014 and runs until 18 August 2014. Responses must reach the DfT before the closing date. E-mail to: NorthernTPEconsultation2014@dft.gsi.gov.uk

The delay in rail re-franchising means that two Direct Franchise Awards are being made by the DfT: one to cover Northern services, which started in April 2014 and one covering TransPennine Express services from April 2015.

The subsequent timetable for the re-franchising is currently as follows:

- Short-listing announced October 2014
- Final Invitations to Tender issued December 2014

- Direct Award for TransPennine franchise March 2015
- Bids returned mid-2015
- Preferred bidders announced October 2015
- Franchises commence 6th February 2016

It would be helpful if members could send me a copy of their responses to this Consultation please.

3. NORTHERN RAIL DIRECT AWARD

The DfT negotiated a direct award with Northern Rail to extend their current franchise until 6th February 2016 when the new Franchisee is expected to takeover the line and the rolling stock. We understand that the terms of the award require some cost reduction – and little prospect of new diesel rolling stock in our area. Fortunately the current performance of the Harrogate Line is good at 93%.

Revenue protection and the ability to purchase tickets before travel are two of Northern Rail's priorities in their Direct Award for the next 22 months.

Northern Rail are planning to install new customer information screens at more stations between Knaresborough and Weeton, similar to those at Poppleton with "live" train information.

4. LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUND 2015/16

The County Council submitted a second bid to the LSTF entitled Harrogate Integrated Travel Project which they said will support the vision of the York, North Yorkshire & East Riding LEP: 'to make York, North Yorkshire and East riding the place in England to grow a small business, combining a vibrant business location with an enviable quality of life' and aims to help address the specific LEP transport priority of 'easing congestion in York and Harrogate.'

This package built on the successful 2013 Harrogate and Knaresborough Sustainable Transport Package LSTF programme, supported planned improvements to the York - Harrogate - Leeds rail service and encouraged private sector investment in local bus services and businesses to increase sustainable travel and help unlock future growth in economic activity and housing in Harrogate.

Measures include:

- Comprehensive integrated travel information for commuters, students and visitors
- Improved customer convenience & confidence, with smarter ticketing & sustainable connectivity
- Targeted promotion of public transport options between York, Harrogate and Leeds
- Improved community transport options in rural areas.

This bid would support sustainable economic growth in line with Harrogate Local Plan and ensure improved connectivity between Harrogate, the rural hinterlands and the wider Leeds city region. Currently the bid has not been successful and work to understand the reason why are on-going.

5. NORTHERN ELECTRIFICATION TASK FORCE

5.1 Electrification Task Force Chairmanship

The Northern Electrification Task Force, established by the Dept for Transport to explore where next for electrification of rail lines in the North, has had its first meeting and Andrew Jones MP for Harrogate & Knaresborough has been appointed Chairman. Andrew has also been re-elected Vice Chair of the Rail in the North All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is a cross-party group of MPs who regularly meet to take evidence from industry and users to promote improvements to the service.

Commenting on these appointments Andrew said: What is these days called connectivity is essential for our local economy; to secure long-lasting and sustained growth. That connectivity can be broadband, air links, rail links and the like. The quicker we can move people, products, raw materials and information around the better we are placed to take advantage of the opportunities in the local, regional and global business market.

Rail is an area which has seen historic under-investment particularly in the north. The government is seeking to address that. There has already been cash allocated to electrify the most used links such as the trans-Pennine link. We are seeing HS2 be progressed and now the government is in the early stages of thinking on HS3 – a high-speed line linking east and west.

Whilst we need to consider the regional context, I know just how desperately the Leeds to York line requires modernising. As a local MP, I will be making that case powerfully on both committees.

Harrogate Chamber's Chief Executive Brian Dunsby welcomed confirmation of Andrew's leading roles in these two key rail committees, commenting to the local media as follows:

"Andrew has been a strong supporter of the Chamber's original bid for electrification of the Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough-York rail line that began in 2010. His past experience and contacts within the DfT as a PPS should enable him to coordinate the various parties involved in determining the best options for the next stage of investment in electrification in the North of England. Clearly the Harrogate Line is a vital service for the Harrogate District economy which depends heavily on business and leisure visitors all day, every day, all the year round and not simply on local peak-hour commuter services.

The detailed Business Case by WSP which was funded by our local councils confirmed that electrification of the Harrogate Line generates excellent value for money with a benefit-to-cost ratio of 3.6:1. It is also technically easier to install overhead lines on this route than some of the other contenders, so we are optimistic that it will be selected for investment. Then the quality and the frequency of trains on the line can be greatly enhanced".

<http://www.harrogate-news.co.uk/2014/07/22/local-mps-enhanced-voice-for-local-rail-investment/>

5.3 Electrification Task Force Membership

The new Northern Electrification Taskforce is made up of experts from Network Rail and the DfT and involves train operators, local authorities including the Rail North consortium, the supply chain and local Members of Parliament. This group will provide the Transport Secretary with an interim report within 12 months setting out how schemes can be brought forward and their development accelerated.

The Task Force members are as follows:

- Andrew Jones MP (Con - Harrogate & Knaresborough)
- Ian Swales MP (Lib Dem - Redcar)
- Julie Hilling (Labour - Bolton West)
- Jo Kaye (Network Rail - Strategy & Planning Director)
- Terry O'Neill (Leader of Warrington Council)
- Dave Green (Leader, Bradford County Council)

The Task Force is being guided by a Steering Group which includes representatives from Rail North, Network Rail and DfT, chaired by South Yorkshire PTE.

They will be supported by a Stakeholder Working Group chaired by Rail North and including representatives from Local Authorities, PTEs, LEPs, Network Rail and DfT plus SYSTRA Consultants who will prepare business cases for each of the lines being considered. (See list in Bulletin 10)

These groups will work closely with the existing Network Rail Electrification Route Utilisation Strategy Working Group and they aim to reach a decision on electrification priorities by February 2015.

SYSTRA is a global leader in public transport infrastructure with 3,800 employees who specialise in consulting and engineering. SYSTRA benefits from over 50 years of experience from its parent companies, SNCF and RATP. It employs state of the art engineering techniques and develops innovative solutions that meet the explosive growth in demand for public transport in and around the world's largest cities, which are home to over half the world's population. Active in 78 countries worldwide, SYSTRA is involved in project planning well before the start of the design stage and continues through to deployment. The Group generates 52% of its revenues outside France

We will keep all our supporters informed if and when this Task Force needs further evidence of potential demand to justify a high priority for electrification of the Leeds – Harrogate - York Line.

6. HARROGATE LINE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

6.1 Double-tracking east of Knaresborough

With £12.5 million funding from North Yorkshire Local Transport Body and the DfT, NYCC has engaged consultants to undertake a feasibility study of restoring some of the missing sections of double track between Knaresborough, Cattal and Poppleton in order to enable operation of a higher frequency service as proposed in the bid for electrification of the line.

This will tie in with Network Rail plans for re-signalling and modernisation or potential removal of some level crossings. Work based on the outline business case is already starting with Network Rail and NYCC as the sponsors. We are doing all we can to prepare the route for all future investments both on the railway and beyond.

6.2 Level Crossings east of Harrogate

Network Rail is studying the feasibility to modernise or potentially close some of the level crossings along the Harrogate Line as part of our Level Crossing programme of works. I would welcome suggestions from members of this Group for potential level crossing closures. *(Brian, we are already looking at the high risk level crossing sites and other locations as opportunities arise. There may therefore be a risk that your members when putting forward a proposal in good faith inadvertently put at risk ongoing / future closure negotiations.*

6.3 Line-speed Improvements. (From Mark Leving)

AS part of the North of England Route Study due to commence January 2016 Network Rail will look at improving journey times along sections of the Harrogate Line. Our Technical Adviser Mark Leving has previously undertaken studies for ATOC which highlighted for example a 15mph main to main crossover 300m south of Harrogate used by Leeds-bound trains departing from Platform1.

Raising the maximum permissible line speed from the southern portal of Bramhope Tunnel to 75mph (the max achievable for the current rolling stock) at least as far as the Arthington (Wharfedale) viaduct and further if possible, would enable the 7 min sectional running time (Horsforth to Weeton) to be robustly achievable and also allow the subsequent station dwell at Pannal to be reduced to half a minute, thereby improving performance and enabling a half minute journey time reduction to be achieved Leeds/Horsforth to Harrogate.

In an electrified scenario we should be pursuing 90-95mph over the same section on account of the greater acceleration and maximum speed capability (generally 90/100mph) of electric multiple unit trains. This would deliver an actual 1m30sec journey time reduction between Horsforth and Weeton.

Obviously, this only reflects one section of the whole route, nonetheless because of the distance, it provides the best opportunity anywhere on the route, hence its priority.

The second priority as far as I can see is the 25mph switch from the double track on to the single line at Knaresborough East for York bound trains. Around 50mph is needed and the benefit (for York bound trains only in this case) is around half a minute. If NYCC are successful in reinstating double track between Knaresborough East and Cattal, then this constraint would be alleviated.

6.4 Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway Station proposal

During a recent short visit to Leeds Bradford Airport, the new Aviation Minister Robert Goodwill, MP for Scarborough, said that "a new rail link to Leeds Bradford Airport is obviously desirable". We agree!

Harrogate Chamber has long campaigned for a link between the Airport and the Harrogate Rail Line which runs just half a mile from the end of the Airport's long stay car park – and only 1.1 miles from the Terminal Building. Our initial suggestions for a shuttle bus service between the Airport and Horsforth Station we rebutted by the Airport Management on costs grounds, although we do wonder whether the potential reduction in car parking revenue influenced their decision to oppose the idea.

Following detailed study of the terrain, Mark Leving has compiled a four-page paper setting out proposals for a Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway Station approximately one mile north of Horsforth Station near the southern portal of the Bramhope tunnel. The station would function as a joint Airport and Park and Ride facility achieving two key objectives:-

- Providing frequent direct rail access to the Airport from Leeds, Harrogate and York centres, thereby serving both West and North Yorkshire effectively.
- Provided much needed accessibility and car parking capacity for new rail users in the surrounding areas of Cookridge, Bramhope, Yeadon and Pool, thereby better enabling the rail route to fulfil a much more valuable role in the areas it serves.

It is proposed that the existing car park shuttle bus is extended by 0.5 miles to the new railway station to fully integrate accessibility between the station and the Airport terminal. All local services would call at the station. If rail-airport traffic were to become significant, the potential use of automated people-mover solutions (as used at Gatwick and Stansted Airports) could be explored.

This approach would enable a valuable and cost-efficient means of providing the Airport with a rail link whilst simultaneously and significantly improving accessibility to the rail route, thereby improving its overall economic viability and contribution to the Leeds City Region. It would also encourage significant modal shift from road to rail through improved accessibility for the areas of Cookridge, Bramhope, Yeadon and Pool, thereby relieving the heavily congested A660 and A65 road corridors.

In terms of improvements to public transport journeys to and from the Airport, previous analysis in 2011 showed that the provision of a station would enable reduced access times of over 15% (approx. 15 minutes) with the number of journey opportunities increasing by 200% on average from a selection of key locations within the wider Leeds City Region.

This proposal is complimentary to other potential longer term options, e.g. tram-train and/or spur-end connection from the existing route near Horsforth to the Airport terminal. It is also achievable at significantly lower cost and shorter timescales, with the added benefits of integrating accessibility from both North and West Yorkshire simultaneously and without creating any substantial additional on-cost of operation, which would be a significant feature of any other option. It also addresses some key accessibility constraints to existing train services over the route around the north and west of Leeds.

Andrew Jones MP has agreed to endorse our proposal and to present it directly to the Aviation Minister.

6.5 Flaxby – Proposed Business Park + Parkway Station

Forward Investments Ltd has submitted a pre-planning application for Flaxby Green Business Park located on the A59 junction with the A1(M) Motorway Junction 47. The plans include provision for a new Rail Station on the adjacent Harrogate Line together with a large Park & Ride car park.

The large site will meet the needs of both existing local businesses needing to grow whilst also offering an attractive environment for inward investment, bringing valuable high quality jobs to the District.

A park and ride site at Junction 47 will be very popular with commuters into Harrogate, Knaresborough and Harrogate, whilst also serving business and leisure visitors the major events in the Harrogate International Centre and at the Great Yorkshire Showground – both having stations nearby.

Further details can be provided to interested parties on request.

7. EAST COAST MAIN LINE FRANCHISE

As previously advised to all members, meetings took place with each of the three short-listed bidders for the East Coast Franchise – namely, First Group; Keolis and Stagecoach/Virgin.

Private meetings were arranged for each bidder with a group of Chamber Officers and several senior local business owners/managers. In addition to explaining the unique characteristics of Harrogate and our need for more regular for direct London services, we presented each bidder with our Information Sheets HT401 and HT424 plus portfolio of letters from local businesses and members of this group.

None of them were permitted to say what they were planning – or to make any commitment on the specific proposals that we put to them

8. HS2 + HS3 – or HSUK?

There is a lot of comment in the media about the plans for HS2 and the mythical HS3, but few seem to be taking notice of the ideal alternative scheme entitled HSUK devised in Yorkshire by Colin Elliff and Quentin McDonald. See www.highspeeduk.co.uk I would welcome comments for a future bulletin.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive Bulletin is being sent to nearly 200 members of the Harrogate Line Supporters Group. Please feel free to forward it to interested parties and encourage anyone who uses Harrogate Line to send me an e-mail expressing their views and requesting to be added to the mailing list in future.

Thank you for your vital support for this voluntary effort to influence the future of RAIL HARROGATE, led by Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce.

Brian L Dunsby, Chief Executive
 HARROGATE CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE
 P O Box 8, Dept HT, HARROGATE HG2 8XB, UK
 Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025
 Mobile: 07836 537512 (only when out of office)
 E-mail: chiefexec@harrogatechamber.org
 LinkedIn: <http://uk.linkedin.com/in/brianldunsby>
 Websites:
www.harrogatechamber.org

www.yorkshirebusinessmarket.org
www.harrogatechristmasmarket.org
www.harrogateatchristmas.org
www.harrogateline.org