

Date: 26 November 2021

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

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Councillor Louise Gittins

Interim Chair
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Dear Secretary of State,

Transport for the North's Statutory Advice in Response to the Integrated Rail Plan

I am writing on behalf of the Transport for the North Board to express our collective disappointment and dismay at the inadequacy of the Integrated Rail Plan; the plan as proposed is unacceptable to the North. The TfN Board meeting on Wednesday noted that the proposals breach the commitments Government had previously made on Northern Powerhouse Rail, and differ from the Board's preferred option, as set out in statutory advice to the Department for Transport.

However, there was also unanimous support from Board members to work with the Government to explore ways in which the long-term ambition underpinning its preferred Northern Powerhouse Rail network might be realised. Given the need to move forward quickly, the Board requests you meet with myself and a delegation from the Board as soon as possible.

The context for the Board's disappointment lies in the fact that we have waited nearly a year for the IRP to be published, and it is more than 21 months since the government accepted Douglas Oakervee's recommendation that both NPR and HS2 should be built in full. The rapid post-pandemic return of passengers and freight to the North's rail network – both of which have been stronger than the national average – demonstrates the critical role that rail plays in supporting our economy and enabling growth.

In discussing the economic and connectivity implications of the Integrated Rail Plan, the Board all agreed the following:

- That the Government acknowledges connectivity East to West is not only about speed but capacity and connection between towns as well as cities;
- That in failing to deal with the infrastructure constraints, particularly around Leeds and Manchester, the plan is the wrong solution for the whole of the North and does not deliver the long-term transformation required to level up the North's economy;
- That the proposals would present significant operational performance risks with intercity, regional, local, and freight services competing for capacity on critical sections of shared infrastructure across the North;

- That TfN's preferred option for Northern Powerhouse Rail would provide up to 12 fast trains per hour between Leeds and Manchester, compared to 8 through the upgrade option in the Integrated Rail Plan;
- That disruption caused to passengers, freight, and the economy by upgrading lines is likely to be more significant than for the construction of new lines;
- That Bradford is the seventh largest local authority area in England by population and its residents currently have no direct rail access to Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle, Hull, or Manchester Airport;
- The importance of Liverpool as a key destination for business and tourism and the insufficient capacity at Liverpool Lime Street Station to support the desired levels of service;
- That the re-opening of the mothballed Leamside line (TfN's preferred option for NPR) would remove the current constraints of six trains per hour on the East Coast Main Line;
- The importance of improving connectivity on strategic corridors between Sheffield and Leeds; Sheffield and Manchester; Sheffield and Hull; Leeds and Hull; and
- That there is a need to ensure the city of Hull and East Riding are reconnected to the Transpennine mainline and plans for electrification are reinstated as part of improved East West decarbonised freight and passenger connectivity.

The Board has asked the Chief Executive of Transport for the North to prepare a report to the Board on the impact the Integrated Rail Plan will have on the North's economic and decarbonisation ambitions. The Board also made clear the importance of publishing the technical work underpinning the IRP as a matter of urgency so there is clarity about the basis on which decisions have been taken.

As a Board, we remain committed to the long-term ambition for improving connectivity across the North and with the Midlands. We remain firm in our collective belief that the Board's preferred approach to HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail best reflects the unique opportunity to unleash the potential of the North, addresses the imbalance in the quality and extent of the rail infrastructure across the UK, and achieves real, positive, and lasting change for the region. It remains essential to retain the long-term ambition for the North's economy that underpins our Strategic Transport Plan to give confidence to investors, and hope to our residents and businesses.

The Board unanimously agreed that it wishes to explore with Government funding options for the delivery of the preferred Northern Powerhouse Rail: options could include local contributions, including through harnessing local economic benefits.

We believe this approach offers the best opportunity to realise our shared ambition for the residents and businesses of the North. We look forward to meeting with you at the earliest opportunity to begin that discussion.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Louise Gittins
Interim Chair