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# Rail North Committee Consultation Call Minutes

**Wednesday 15 December 2021  
Virtual**

**Present:**

**Attendee**

Cllr Liam Robinson (Chair)  
Cllr Karen Shore  
Mayor Andy Burnham

Cllr Charles Edwards  
Cllr Daren Hale  
Mayor Jamie Driscoll  
Cllr Don Mackenzie  
Mayor Dan Jarvis

Cllr Heather Scott  
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe

**Local Authority**

Liverpool City Region;  
Cheshire & the Potteries  
Greater Manchester Combined  
Authority;

Lakeland  
Humber;

North of Tyne Combined Authority;  
North Yorkshire;

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined  
Authority;

Tees Valley;

West Yorkshire Combined Authority &  
York;

**Also in Attendance:**

Bob Morris  
Tobyn Hughes  
Mark Powles  
Darren Higgins

Greater Manchester  
North East  
Northern  
Transpennine Express

**Officers in Attendance:**

**Name**

Martin Tugwell  
Adam Timewell  
Chris Roberts  
Gary Rich  
Dawn Madin  
Julie Openshaw  
Gary Bogan  
Manjit Dhillon  
David Hoggarth

**Job Title**

Chief Executive  
Commercial Manager - Northern  
Commercial Manager - TPE Franchise  
Democratic Services Officer  
Director of Business Capabilities  
Head of Legal  
Rail North Partnership Director  
Senior Solicitor  
Strategic Rail Director

**Item No:****1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and apologies were received from Cllrs Browne, Gannon, Hannigan and Waltham.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

- 3.1 The minutes of the Consultation Call held on 15 September 2021 were considered for their accuracy.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Consultation Call held on 15 September be noted.

**4. Rail Reform Next Steps**

- 4.1 Members received the report from the Head of Rail Specification & Delivery who highlighted the key areas of the report.
- 4.2 The report was welcomed by the Chair who endorsed its discussion at the next Board meeting. He also welcomed the proposed discussions with the Mayoral Combined Authorities and local authorities on the "Double devolution" principle.
- 4.3 Mayor Driscoll echoed the comments of the Chair and highlighted the work being done in the North East and Cumbria where authorities are working together on the Carlisle to Newcastle Railway. He also provided his support for the profit and loss approach and stated the North is happy to make decisions for its residents due to knowing them best and that the leaders of the North are not afraid of accountability.
- 4.4 Cllr Hinchcliffe welcomed the opportunity for more devolution on to the railways.
- 4.5 The Strategic Rail Director highlighted the benefits of the Rail North Partnership; he explained that whilst not giving full devolution it does provide a building block and that Great British Railways (GBR) want to build on these partnerships. He further explained that there is a provision for further devolution through the Business Unit model and this will be explored with partners.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive stated that TfN is tracking the legislative framework being taken through Parliament to establish GBR. He explained that the

work being undertaken enables TfN to advise on how the legislative framework needs to work and builds on what exists.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress on working with the industry on implementing the Rail White Paper in the North;
- 2) That the Committee endorses the approach set out in this report including the proposal to utilise existing levers within the Rail North Partnership Agreement set out in paragraphs 3.11-3.19;
- 3) That officers undertake deeper discussion of the development of the new partnership with Great British Railways, especially in relation to a prioritised pipeline of investment and double devolution, to take place early in 2022, after Transport for the North has initiated discussions with Great British Railways Transition Team and the Mayoral Combined Authorities and LEPs

**5. Rail North Partnership Operational Update**

- 5.1 Members received the report from the Director of the Rail North Partnership who highlighted the general levels of performance for the operators across the North. He described current performance levels as “solid” and that this autumn has been the best experienced in a while.
- 5.2 Mr. Darren Higgins updated Members on the progress of Transpennine Express and provided an update on the recovery. He explained that at the end of period 9 that performance was at 72% of the pre-Covid benchmark and that they have been performing ahead of the UK Rail and long distance sector benchmarks over recent months. He highlighted the continued strong performance in the leisure market which at that point was performing at 89% of pre-Covid levels. The growth in performance of the commuter market is slower than the leisure market.
- 5.3 Mr. Mark Powles highlighted Northern’s strong summer where they outperformed their peer group and large parts of the industry by 10%. However, he highlighted that the recovery is a leisure led one and that the leisure market has remained strong throughout the Autumn. He explained the return to work market has been sluggish and the season ticket market is around 35-38% but the advance purchase market has been stronger.

From operational point of view he highlighted issues with staff availability and that decisions are being made as issues emerge. Weekend operating was also highlighted as a problematic issue.

- 5.4 Members raised a number of issues relating to train issues in their constituent areas.

- 5.5 Cllr Mackenzie highlighted the union action being taken by TPE employees which led to disruption to some services and enquired as to the current position.

Mr. Higgins explained that the union action was a late development and they needed to communicate as quickly as possible on the issue. He further explained that this did have an impact on service delivery however other arrangements were put into place to limit disruption.

The Chair encouraged TPE to negotiate with the unions to resolve the issues.

- 5.6 Mayor Burnham raised the issue of cancellations penalties for operators and enquired as to how these work under the new contracts.

The Rail North Partnership Director explained that these are still covered in the contracts and feed through to the performance payments as well as having remedial provisions attached to them. He further explained that Northern work differently as they are an operator of last resort. He stated that he would ask officers to provide Mayor Burnham with the full details.

- 5.7 Mayor Driscoll raised the issue of connecting rural areas and offered to work together to lobby for extra pathways.

- 5.8 Cllr Hinchcliffe highlighted the faster recovery in the North and stated that this needs to be flagged to Government so that subsidies can be gained and the North get the services that are required.

The Chair stated that due to the strong recovery the North should not be facing the cuts that the Government is suggesting. He further added that there should not be an acceptance of the December 2021 timetable as a baseline as this was a pandemic timetable and should not be seen as the new normal and that Members want to be partners in designing the new timetables.

- 5.9 Mayor Burnham raised the issue of the finance of the recovery; in highlighting the recovery of Northern he expressed concern that revenues appear greater than the return of passengers and was concerned that this was due to an increase in fare prices.

Mr. Powles explained that this was due to reduced season ticket purchases which are cheaper in cost than other tickets.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**6. Manchester Recovery Task Force**

- 6.1 Members received the report from the Strategic Rail Director who highlighted the key areas of the report.

- 6.2 Mayor Jarvis stated that the current position is sub-optimal due to under investment in the rail network in the North of England. He re-enforced the need to have a sustained period of investment from Central Government as the IRP does not correct the current issues.

He highlighted the need for the re-instatement of the Sheffield to Manchester airport service as well as seeking assurances around a third fast train on Hope Valley Line.

In response to Mayor Jarvis the Strategic Rail Director stated that the task force has both of Mayor Jarvis's points in mind when developing the blueprint for future services and infrastructure.

- 6.3 Mayor Burnham expressed his concerns that service levels are falling below acceptable levels. He stated that he was unwilling to accept a reduced timetable without an exit route and believes that the North is being encouraged to accept an inferior substitute on the issue of infrastructure.

In relation to platforms 15 and 16 at Manchester Piccadilly he stated that these platforms will make a difference as part of the solution with other infrastructure work in order to deal with the bottle necks in Central Manchester.

Mayor Burnham stated that he would not endorse the new timetable without a parallel timetable for the delivery of infrastructure and stated that he will be formally object to the new timetable unless a firm plan is in place for infrastructure improvements which will give an end date to the temporary timetable.

He also called for declassification of trains where there are first class carriages and capacity shortfalls.

In response the Strategic Rail Director stated that the blueprint will be the vehicle for showing that clarity and requested that this is brought back; in conjunction with this he will take the Committee's strong messages to the DfT.

- 6.4 The Chair stated that the declassification of services is practical and requested that the potential of this be investigated further.
- 6.5 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested an indication about how future service priorities will be organised in future timetables and that the wider North of England be considered.
- 6.6 Cllr Scott requested a blueprint for the East Coast Mainline.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress made on the development of the December 2022 timetable and the next steps including the further round of public consultation in November 2021 and December 2021.
- 2) That the Committee notes the progress on working with the Department for Transport and industry colleagues on developing the infrastructure solution which will be reflected in the blueprint' identifying a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor to restore and improve connectivity.
- 3) That the Committee notes the positive progress on infrastructure, including industry agreement on the required configuration of Oxford Road station, modelling work on the additional performance benefits from delivering Platforms 15/16 at Piccadilly at the same time as the infrastructure changes at Oxford Road and confirmation from the Department for Transport of a £26m allocation to fund further development work on infrastructure.

**7. Investment Planning**

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Interim Head of Investment Planning who highlighted the key points within the report.
- 7.2 Mayor Driscoll raised the issues of infrastructure and train stopping patterns and how they impact on train times. He explained that the only way to solve the problem is recognition that all trains are part of the same system and if this is recognised then other lines may then be reopened.  
  
He also raised the importance of stations being staffed and how valuable this is for the travelling public.
- 7.3 Members raised a variety of issues about rail issues in their constituent areas.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress with development of the case for capacity upgrades to the East Coast Main Line and the impact of the Integrated Rail Plan;
- 2) That the Committee notes the progress with development of the case for capacity, connectivity and performance upgrades to the Leeds area and the relationship to the Integrated Rail Plan;
- 3) That the Committee notes the pending update of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline in relation to rail projects in the region;
- 4) That the report be presented for discussion at the January TfN Board meeting.

**8. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 9 on the grounds that:

- (1) It is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during such item(s), confidential information as defined in S100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them in breach of the obligation of confidence; and/or
- (2) it / they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the Paragraphs [where necessary listed below] of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **9. Operator Business Plans**

- 9.1 The report was received by Members who were then invited to ask questions and make comments.

### **Resolved:**

That the report of the Rail North Partnership Director be noted.