

**Meeting:** Rail North Partnership

**Subject:** Rail North Partnership Operational Update

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**Sponsor:** David Hoggarth

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday 15 December, 2021

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**1. Purpose of the Report:**

1.1 To update the committee on operational rail matters overseen by Rail North Partnership (RNP) and to ask members to note the information in the report.

**2. Recommendations:**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the information in the report.

**3. Contract Updates**

**3.1 Northern Trains Ltd**

Northern Trains Ltd (NTL) is demonstrating a strong post-covid recovery with data showing that it has achieved up to 88% of pre-Covid revenues at the time of writing and 77% of overall pre-Covid journey demand. Similar to other operators, Northern is experiencing high demand at the weekend.

Neville Hill Maintenance Depot transferred to Northern this autumn which employs around 550 engineers, technicians, and train presentation operatives. The depot was jointly managed by East Midlands Railway and Northern and the transfer allows the operator to open up opportunities to develop the depot with plans to work with educational and development partnerships.

Driver and crew training continue and the reduction in Covid restrictions means that Northern has been able to progress through its training backlog more quickly and place qualified drivers into the timetable schedule. We will of course need to understand any further impacts the Omicron variant may mean to progress and programme.

Details of the December 2021 timetable have been shared with members at earlier committee meetings.

RNP Management Team continue to work with TfN and members on the details of the extension of Northern Trains Limited's Services Agreement well beyond March 2022 (for up to five years).

**3.2 TransPennine Express**

The operator is experiencing a strong post-Covid recovery with the leisure market generally higher than the average long-distance demand. During rail period seven (19 September to 16 October 2021), passenger numbers stood at around 68% of pre Covid-19 levels. TransPennine Express (TPE) also continued to see a rise in smart ticketing purchases to 67.9% during this period and ticketless travel was estimated to have further reduced by 7% in September.

The operator supported COP 26 and Transport Scotland in October and early November with additional weekend services to Glasgow which generated a strong demand.

In October, a new Service Quality Regime (SQR) was launched for TPE as part of the requirements under the National Rail Contract. The framework sets out expected progress in various areas of Service Quality (on train, on station and passenger information) and marks the operator against them. The SQR is a means of securing value for money and ensuring standards are being met given the level of financial support provided by the public sector.

TPE introduced a number of service changes for December 2021. The biggest change is the reintroduction of the Scarborough to Manchester and the new Edinburgh to Newcastle service which provides inter-regional connectivity for the Lothians, Scottish Borders, and Northumberland. The Scarborough to Manchester service means that from December there will be increased capacity with four TPE trains per hour running along the Leeds-Huddersfield-Manchester route compared to the three currently. This will help relieve overcrowding. Manchester Airport to Scottish services will also be moved up hourly from two-hourly.

TPE has been notified that it can go ahead with the extension of the lease of 15 three-car 185 trains, meaning that the whole fleet will remain with TPE. These were due to come off lease on 31 December 2021 and discussions have been taking place with the operator and the rolling stock owner to understand the cost and capacity implications. Outstanding issues have now been resolved and the 15 units will be used in rolling stock plans for the Transpennine Route Upgrade. TPE is developing a rolling stock plan as part of the annual Business Plan which will be shared with Rail North Partnership and Transport for the North.

### 3.3 **CrossCountry**

CrossCountry has seen leisure journeys return to around 80% of pre-Covid levels particularly around Manchester however commuter journeys are at 50% and long-distance business travel is at 25% compared to before Covid.

Since Monday 29 November, the operator has run a reduced timetable due to train crew availability. In the North East and Scotland, the operator is looking to run fewer carriages than usual on some services from Monday to Friday and Sunday. Saturday will see some part-cancellations with some trains terminating at Newcastle rather than Edinburgh. It is working closely with other operators to ensure customers' tickets will be accepted on other services. There are also plans for a bus replacement service where necessary.

CrossCountry continues to operate doubled train formations due to Covid which means there is no direct Newcastle to Reading and this remains the case for the December 2021 timetable change. There is also still no direct service between Manchester and Bristol.

Details are still to be finalised for the May 2022 timetable and work is ongoing for May 2023 timetable change. The operator is looking at an option for the return of an additional Edinburgh service and a Doncaster southbound service for May 2022. It also continues to review stops at Chesterfield and from this month (December 2021), there will be six additional calls back into the timetable – three each way.

### 3.4 **Avanti**

Performance for Avanti during rail period 8 (17 October to 13 November) was 44% on-time. It was 65% Timetable -3 minutes, 88% at Timetable -10 minutes

and 93% at Timetable -15%. The storms and floods had a significant impact on the Avanti services.

The Anglo-Scottish route remains the busiest route where demand has been driven by the leisure traveller. The operator is still at around 65% of pre-Covid demand and although it is seeing the return of commuter travel, there isn't a trend emerging at this stage as people combine working from home with trips to the office.

Work is currently underway on the operator's Pendolino fleet refurbishment as part of a £117 million investment designed to transform the 56 trains into 'as new' condition.

## **4.0 Timetable Updates**

### **4.1 Boxing Day Service Update**

The delivery of a Boxing Day Service from Liverpool Lime Street to St Helens is progressing. Operators, RNP and Network Rail have worked well together to put the service in place. The potential impact of heightened covid restrictions and poor weather is being considered and there will be a final check-in before Boxing Day to make any last-minute adjustments.

### **4.2 May 2022 Timetable**

The baseline timetable for future timetable changes is December 2021 and there is a continued focus on services needing to meet passenger demand, providing value for money, maintaining performance, and avoiding duplication with other services. The planned services for May 2022 were outlined in September's Rail North Committee meeting and the service uplifts are being considered as part of the business plan process to ensure operators meet budget expectations.

### **4.3 December 2022 Timetable**

The Manchester Recovery Taskforce work dominates the December 2022 timetable change for the North. However, sitting outside this is a TPE proposal to introduce an extension which delivers a direct service between Hull and Liverpool. This has been achieved by swapping the end destination of the Scarborough – Liverpool service with the Hull – Manchester service. TPE is currently consulting on the proposal which will see the service run via Manchester Victoria and remain at one train per hour. This direct service will mean a reduction in the journey time from Hull to Liverpool by 25 minutes compared with a similar journey today which has a change of trains at Huddersfield. It also brings direct connectivity to Liverpool and for Scarborough, direct connectivity to Manchester Piccadilly and additional opportunities for direct connectivity to Scarborough for Slaithwaite, Marsden, Greenfield, & Mossley. As part of the consultation process, TPE will focus on key local authorities, MPs, user groups and some business organisations along the route. A briefing has been sent out and people are invited to give feedback via email. The consultation will close on Friday 14 January 2022.

### **4.4 Manchester Recovery Taskforce Update**

The second phase of the MRTF consultation was launched on Monday 15 November. NTL and TPE have mirror copies of the consultation on their websites and East Midlands Railway and Transport for Wales are signposting to the consultation. Most of the responses to date have been from individuals rather than organisations and the operators have asked for an early heads-up from TfN members on any issues to give them time to assess the options.

## 5.0 Performance

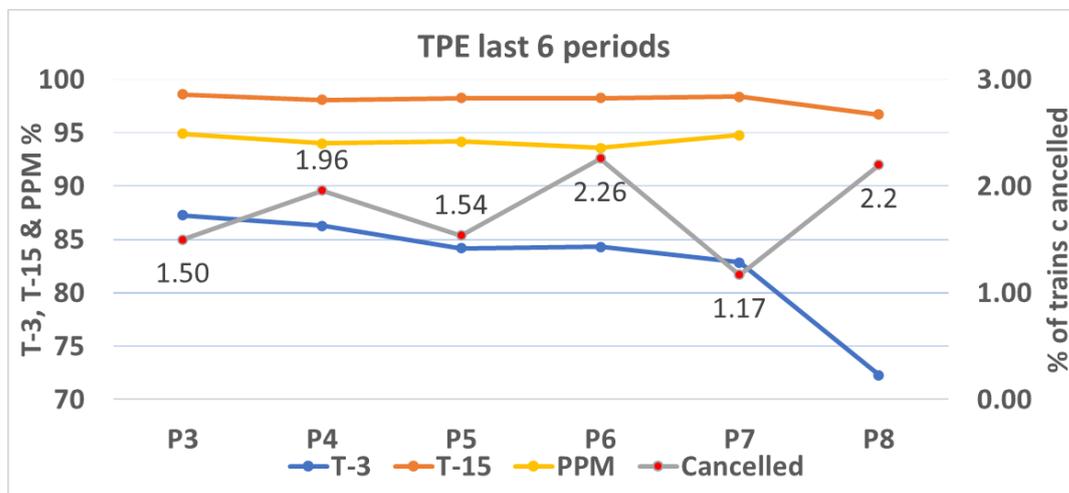
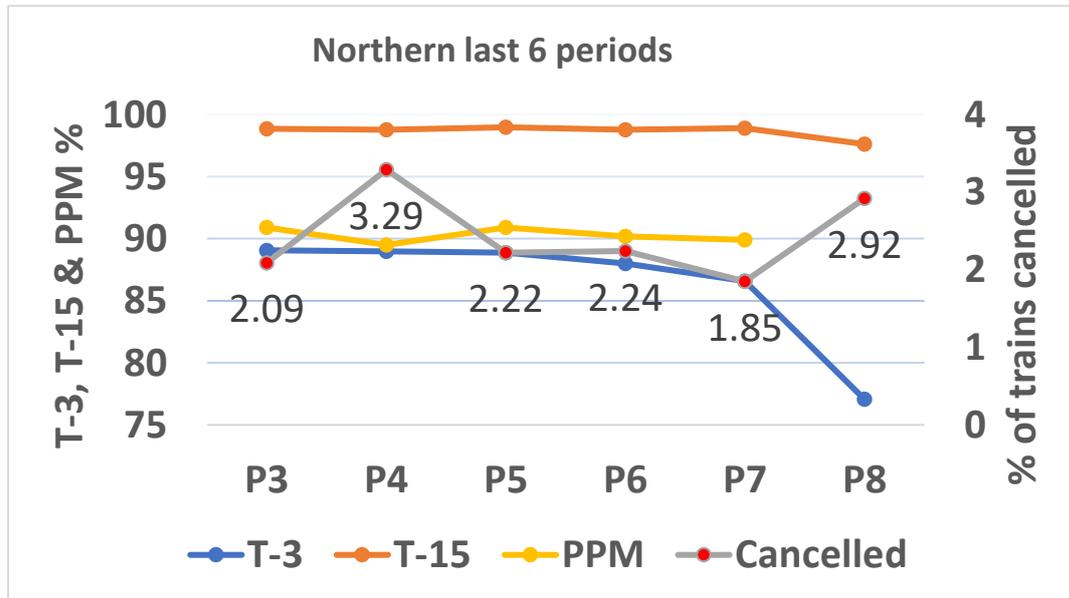
### 5.1 Headlines

A performance snapshot for Northern and TPE over that last six months is set out below. The charts show the the performance metrics for each operator.

TPE had a good period which saw all reporting metrics achieved. Northern had a challenging period that saw T-3 (within 3 minutes of timetabled time) & T-15 (within 15 minutes of timetabled time) metrics only just miss target which was mainly a result of rail head adhesion due to leaf fall particularly around Huddersfield, Keighley, Shipley and Bradford areas. The present leaf fall data suggests that most leaves have now fallen and this should improve performance through the current industry reporting period.

The increase in cancellations across both operators is mostly attributed to train failures and severe weather (including flooding), but it should be noted that both operators achieved their cancellation target metrics.

Looking ahead to the current period both TPE and Northern started well but then took a huge performance hit due to Storm Arwen. They have both since recovered but require some really good performance to achive targets by the end of the period.



## **6. Corporate Considerations**

### **6.1 Finance Implications**

There are no direct finance implications as a result of this report.

### **6.2 Resource Implications**

There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.

### **6.3 Legal Implications**

There are no apparent legal implications for TfN as a result of this report.

### **6.4 Risk Management and Key Issues**

This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to the December 2022 timetable are being identified, managed, and monitored through the Rail North Partnership.

### **6.5 Environmental Implications**

This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the EIA Directive and therefore does stimulate the need for SEA or EIA.

### **6.6 Equality and Diversity**

An impact assessment is not required as the report provides an update on the work of the Rail North Partnership and the train operators.

### **6.7 Consultations**

Train operators are responsible for consulting on the details of timetable changes – there are open public consultations on the December 2022 timetable change.

## **7. Background Papers**

7.1 There are no background papers to this report.

## **8. Appendices**

8.1 There are no appendices to this report.