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**Meeting:** Transport for the North Board  
**Subject:** HS2 Update  
**Author:** Jonathan Brown, Strategic Rail Lead  
**Sponsor:** Tim Foster, Strategy and Programme Director  
**Meeting Date:** Thursday 30 June 2022

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**1. Purpose of the Report:**

- 1.1 HS2 will provide a new high speed and high capacity railway network between London, the Midlands and North. TfN has consistently supported full delivery of HS2, which complements and enables the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail as well as supporting the long distance connectivity for the North West and Scotland as envisaged in the Union Connectivity Review.
- 1.2 Following the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan, significant changes to HS2 have been made to both the Eastern and Western legs of Phase 2b, with a number of further studies proposed but not yet defined. The hybrid Bill for Phase 2b is currently being considered by Parliament. The Government has confirmed that the Golborne Link has been removed from the Bill but has not specified what alternatives are being considered or formally responded to the Union Connectivity Review.

**2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 The Board asks the Chairman to write to the Secretary of State to restating its support for HS2 to the North and the Board's continued desire to work with the Government to deliver it at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 2.2 The letter to the Secretary of State should also recommend that:
- The terms of reference for the HS2 Sheffield to Leeds study be published as soon as possible.
  - The Government uses its response to the Union Connectivity Review as the opportunity to commission work on the alternatives to the Golborne Link will be developed and that this work should be taken forward in collaboration with TfN.
  - Clarity is required as to how HS2 and NPR services will serve Crewe.
  - Where savings are realised as a result of changes to the design of HS2 and/or NPR these should be retained within the overall funding envelope defined in the Integrated Rail Plan.
  - Further clarity is required on the decisions made in respect of Manchester Piccadilly.

**3. Main Issues:**

- 3.1 HS2 is the Government's programme to provide a new high speed and high capacity railway network between London, the Midlands and North. The Strategic Transport Plan (STP) recognises the substantial benefits of HS2 to the North and TfN has been a strong supporter of the HS2 network as confirmed in 2016.
- 3.2 As proposed at that time, the HS2 network would run from London to the West Midlands, with an Eastern leg extending to the East Midlands, Sheffield, Leeds and connecting to the East Coast Main Line to York and the North East, and Western Leg running to Manchester via Crewe with a connection to the West

Coast Main Line south of Wigan, allowing Lancashire, Cumbria and Scotland to be served.

- 3.3 HS2 is important in providing NPR links between Manchester and Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds and other NPR infrastructure, such as the Crewe Northern Connection, are also important to HS2. For these reasons, it is important to see HS2 and NPR as part of wider plans to grow rail in the North, particularly given the role has to play in enabling economic growth and in decarbonising our transport system.
- 3.4 The November 2021 Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) set out that the Eastern Leg of HS2 would only be built from the West Midlands as far as East Midlands Parkway, with Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield served by extending on to the existing rail network. York and the North East would continue to be served by the East Coast Main Line as now, as would Leeds, however a study would be commissioned to consider how HS2 trains could travel beyond Sheffield to serve Leeds. The IRP retained the Western Leg as previously proposed.

### ***Golborne Link***

- 3.5 The Golborne Link is a 22km section of HS2 which splits from the Manchester Route at Hoo Green in Cheshire and links to the West Coast Main Line at Bamfurlong, south of Wigan. It allows HS2 trains to reach Wigan, Preston, Lancaster and stations in Cumbria and extending to Scotland. It bypasses the congested two track Winsford to Weaver Junction section of the West Coast Main Line (WCML), releasing capacity for regional, local and freight services. Golborne Link remained in the IRP HS2 network however it was noted that the Union Connectivity Review final report was (at the time) outstanding and may suggest alternatives.
- 3.6 The Union Connectivity Review report was published in November 2021 shortly after the IRP, and reported to the Board in January 2022. Specifically on the Golborne Link, the Union Connectivity Review suggested there should be a review of alternative northerly connections between HS2 and the West Coast Main Line. It suggested other options to connect to the WCML south of Preston could offer a two to three minute faster journey than the Golborne Link, however more work is needed to understand the case. The HS2 Hybrid Bill published on 24 January sought powers to construct Golborne Link and the rest of the IRP HS2 proposals.
- 3.7 The Government is intending to issue a formal response to the Union Connectivity Review later in 2022, however a written Ministerial Statement on 6 June said that "we can confirm the government will look again at alternatives which deliver similar benefits to Scotland as the Golborne link, so long as these deliver for the taxpayer within the £96 billion envelope allocated for the Integrated Rail Plan. We will look at the potential for these alternatives to bring benefits to passengers sooner, allowing improved Scotland services from Manchester and Manchester Airport, as well as from Birmingham and London. HS2 trains will continue to serve Wigan and Preston, as well as Lancaster, Cumbria and Scotland. Government, therefore, intends to remove the Golborne link from the High-Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill after second reading. That means that we will no longer be seeking the powers to construct the link as part of this scheme."
- 3.8 It is important to recognise that strategic infrastructure projects, such as HS2, continue to evolve over time as they are developed in detail. It is therefore not unusual for proposals to be the subject of review and change. The key in such circumstances is to remain focused on the outcomes sought from the project and to assess alternatives for their consistency with them.
- 3.9 Whilst there is at the moment no information as to what these alternatives are or when they could be delivered, the Government is expected to formally respond to

the Union Connectivity Review later this autumn. It would be appropriate for TfN to seek that the Government uses its response as the opportunity to set out the way forward for considering alternatives to the Golborne Link. Given the importance of HS2 to the North's strategic transport network it is essential that TfN is involved in any work taken forward.

- 3.10 TfN recommends that prior to commissioning work on alternatives to the Golborne Link there is agreement on the strategic outcomes being sought. TfN would expect that those outcomes would include explicit recognition of the need to get HS2 trains to serve Wigan, Preston, Lancaster, Carlisle and onwards to Scotland.
- 3.11 A key consideration of any work on alternatives to the Golborne Link would be the limitations of the existing network recognising that parts of the West Coast Main Line are busy with long distance and regional passenger trains as well as being a key freight artery. Clarity and timing of next steps is important so that the expected benefits of high speed rail to Wigan, Lancashire and Cumbria are maximised.
- 3.12 In its response to the IRP the TfN Board emphasised the importance – through the Co-Sponsor arrangement – to continue to challenge costs within the rail industry. This position reflected the work done to remove costs from the Board's preferred NPR proposal which suggested that there is scope for further reduction in scheme costs. The current inflationary pressures within the construction sector makes such an approach all the more important. The TfN Board remain of the view that where cost savings are realised within the IRP programme these should be allocated to other IRP schemes in the North.

### ***Crewe***

- 3.13 Crewe is already a significant station on the West Coast Main Line with good connections to main centres. HS2 offers the catalyst to develop the station and surrounding area maximising on enhanced capacity and significant work has been led by Cheshire East Council to plan for this. The most recent HS2 Strategic Outline Business Case describes Crewe as "a vital 'super-hub', connecting high-speed services and the existing railway network. It also notes that this could enable 7,000 new homes and 37,000 new jobs by 2043.
- 3.14 The Crewe Northern Connection, which allows trains calling at the Crewe HS2 station to rejoin HS2 infrastructure to head north to Manchester or other destinations is a key part of the plans for wider development at Crewe. The Northern Connection is however part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme rather than HS2, although it is included in the HS2 Hybrid Bill. In effect, the NPR programme is delivering a large part of the claimed HS2 benefits for Crewe, through links to Manchester Airport, Piccadilly and North Wales. In addition, the London to Liverpool route via Warrington is also part of NPR and provides a faster alternative than use of the WCML and the current route via Runcorn.
- 3.15 It is therefore important that HS2 and NPR are planned in an integrated manner and that a holistic view of high speed service offer at Crewe is taken rather than a programme-specific view. The STP recognises the benefits of the Crewe Hub and TfN has consistently supported both HS2 and the Crewe Northern Connection because of the benefits that these bring in combination to the North.

### ***Manchester Piccadilly***

- 3.16 Piccadilly station in Manchester requires significant additional platform capacity to accommodate terminating HS2 services and through NPR services. This could be delivered through a surface addition to the station (the Government's preferred option presented in the 2b Bill) or by constructing an underground through

station. A surface station at Piccadilly would have significant implications for the footprint of Piccadilly and the eastern approaches to the Station, as well as for east west connectivity. Both Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Manchester City Council have indicated their intention to petition against the HS2 Bill.

- 3.17 The TfN Board's position on Piccadilly, established in 2020, has been that both the underground and surface options should be considered on a like for like basis in the Integrated Rail Plan. However the IRP concluded that the underground station was not affordable within the available funding envelope and therefore should not be pursued. However, to date, a full like-for-like comparison of the two options has not been published. It is recommended that TfN should seek publication of such an analysis by the Government.

### ***Eastern Leg***

- 3.18 The IRP curtailed the Eastern Leg of HS2 to a route from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway only, with a study of how HS2 trains could serve beyond Sheffield and on to Leeds. The Terms of Reference for this study have not been released by the Government.
- 3.19 A governance process has been established by West Yorkshire Combined Authority for this work and TfN is supporting the work by providing analysis and information and will continue to do so once the study formally commences. The output from the study is important not only in terms of providing clarity on what is proposed for the rail network, it is also critical in terms of understanding whether the current safeguarding of land associated with the original proposal needs to be retained. It is recommended that TfN should seek the publication of the Terms of Reference as a matter of some urgency.

### ***Hybrid Bill***

- 3.14 The Government is seeking powers to construct the Crewe to Manchester section of HS2 through a Hybrid Bill initially deposited into Parliament on 24 January and subsequently revised. The Hybrid Bill is now in a formal Parliamentary process at which the scheme and objections will be formally examined by a Committee. The Bill received a second reading in the House of Commons on 20 June. A Bill Committee will be established and there will be a period to submit petitions for consideration by the Committee. This period is currently expected to run until 4 August.

### ***Conclusions***

- 3.15 HS2 is very significant for the North for both connectivity and growth, and confirmation of the Western Leg in the Integrated Rail Plan was welcomed by the Board in November. Whilst the changes to the Eastern Leg have had significant implications for connectivity between the Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East, TfN welcomed the commitment to the new study on options for serving Leeds and it is essential that the terms of reference for that study are published and work is taken forward at pace.
- 3.16 The decision to remove the Golborne Link from the Bill is effectively removing a section of committed infrastructure in the North. Clarity on the process for developing alternatives is important, as is ensuring that any alternatives provide at least the same strategic outcomes as were anticipated for the Golborne Link, and that funding is recycled within the funding envelope agreed.
- 3.17 In advocating for HS2, TfN has also stressed repeatedly the complementarity and inter-dependency of HS2 and NPR, and the need for these to be planned as an integrated network. This is particularly important for key interface locations such as Crewe, Manchester Airport and Manchester Piccadilly. TfN is a co-Sponsor of

NPR but not of HS2, however there are parts of HS2 that are essential for NPR, and at Crewe NPR delivers the full benefits of the Crewe “super hub”.

- 3.18 As per the recommendations in section 1 of this report, Officers recommend the Board instruct the Chair to write to the Secretary of State in line with the conclusions of this report.

#### **4. Corporate Considerations**

##### ***Financial Implications***

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

##### ***Resource Implications***

- 4.2 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

##### ***Legal Implications***

- 4.3 The legal implications have been considered in the report and will be kept under review as the Hybrid Bill progresses through Parliament.

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

- 4.4 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

##### ***Environmental Implications***

- 4.5 There are no environmental implications arising from this report. 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 not stimulate the need for SEA or EIA. All proposed infrastructure developments will be subject to screening for the need for EIA by the relevant development authority as part of the design development and consenting process.

- 4.6 Passenger rail has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within TfNs Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around reducing private car vehicle mileage.

##### ***Equality and Diversity***

- 4.6 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

##### ***Consultations***

- 4.7 Informal discussions have been held with TfN Member authorities in the areas affected and these have informed the content of this report.

#### **5. Background Papers**

- 5.1 There are no background papers.

#### **6. Appendices**

- 6.1 There are no appendices.

#### **Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (if applicable)**

a) HS2	High Speed 2
b) IRP	Integrated Rail Plan
c) NPR	Northern Powerhouse Rail
d) WCML	West Coast Main Line

