
Meeting: Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee
Subject: Northern Powerhouse Rail Co-Sponsorship
Author: Jonathan Brown, Strategic Rail Lead
Sponsor: Darren Oldham, Rail and Roads Director
Meeting Date: Thursday 2 March 2023

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Northern Powerhouse Rail, specifically the development of the NPR co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding which formalises Transport for the North's role on the programme following publication of the Integrated Rail Plan.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes that the Board will be asked to endorse the Northern Powerhouse Rail Sponsorship Agreement in March 2023.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is a major programme to improve rail connectivity between main centres of the North through a combination of new routes and significant upgrades to existing rail routes. Development work on NPR has been jointly led by Transport for the North (TfN) and the Department for Transport (DfT) over a number of years operating as co-clients. The TfN Board agreed its preferred NPR network in early 2021 and provided advice to the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 3.2 The Government published its Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) in November 2021 setting out plans for rail in the North and Midlands. The IRP proposed an NPR network which is less extensive than the TfN preferred network however forms a core which could be developed to a more extensive network over time. This would include connectivity to Bradford and Hull, between Sheffield and Manchester and between Sheffield and Leeds that is linked to HS2 plans which are currently unclear. The draft Strategic Transport Plan stresses the need to fully complete NPR and HS2 as originally planned to achieve maximum benefit to the North. If delivered, the IRP does however represent a significant commitment to the North, and the IRP version of NPR can be added to as funding becomes available in later years. The NPR co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding (referred to subsequently as the sponsorship agreement) provides for TfN to conduct work looking at additional corridors and to support this, TfN has employed additional staff who will work alongside DfT colleagues to ensure that the NPR schemes developed are optimised.
- 3.3 The IRP also proposed a change to the role of TfN, with the DfT becoming sole client for NPR and TfN assuming the role of co-sponsor jointly with the DfT. As a result, the DfT became sole client on 1 April 2022 and several posts were transferred from TfN to DfT to support this. The arrangements for co-sponsorship of NPR were agreed by the TfN Board in March 2022. To formalise these, a sponsorship agreement has been jointly developed by TfN and the DfT and is attached as Appendix 1. This agreement has recently been endorsed by Ministers and will be presented to the TfN Board for endorsement in March 2023.
- 3.4 The senior governance is provided by the NPR Sponsor Board. The Board is comprised of three named representatives from each of TfN and DfT, supported

by Network Rail and HS2 Limited with other supporting attendees. The Sponsor Board is accountable for ensuring that the work is governed effectively and delivers the objectives that meet identified needs. TfN has indicated its intention that its three named attendees will include a senior partner officer representative, mirroring the officer-led Rail North Partnership Board which oversees the Northern and Transpennine Express rail contracts.

- 3.5 The Sponsor Board's direct responsibility is the core NPR network as defined in the IRP, essentially between Liverpool and York via Manchester and Leeds. Delivery of NPR is however reliant on other programmes in particular HS2, Transpennine Route Upgrade and the East Coast Main Line Enhancements Programme. These programmes, referred to as "Dependencies" in the agreement are outside of the co-sponsorship remit with integration managed by the DfT. Whilst this means there is not direct TfN involvement with these programmes, the Sponsor Board does give TfN another avenue to raise issues or concerns alongside the formal role to provide statutory advice to the Secretary of State.
- 3.6 The Sponsor Board meets quarterly and three such meetings have been held to date. These have operated under the model set out in the sponsorship agreement albeit before it has been formally ratified through both TfN and DfT governance. Sponsor Board Papers have been shared with TfN Partner authorities and views fed in, with feedback provided after the meetings. In the last year, the level of partner, and TfN, involvement in NPR has been limited and substantially less than in the co-client period, although the level of engagement is gradually increasing as the NPR programme transitions into delivery. Additionally, TfN has now put in place additional resources (supported by the sponsorship agreement) and will be working with DfT to further increase the level of engagement.
- 3.7 The Board will be asked to endorse the sponsorship agreement to maximise TfN's influence on NPR with the framework of the committed IRP scheme. The sponsorship agreement is important in formalising TfN's future role on NPR. It defines way that the Sponsorship process will operate. In effect, the agreement sets out the minimum expectations for the process.

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report.

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

- 4.3 Transport for the North is a co-sponsor of the NPR Programme and will need to enter into a formal agreement with the DfT for this purpose, which the Board will be asked to endorse in March 2023. The implications of this are covered in the body of the report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 4.4 There are two risks in relation to NPR Co-sponsorship, which are being managed on TfN's corporate risk register. The sponsorship agreement provides sufficient safeguards for this risk to be managed so that TfN retains influence over the NPR Programme.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 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. Any infrastructure proposals to improve the capacity and reliability of the system will be subject to

EIA Screening, conducted by DfT and its delivery partners as part of the consenting process for those projects.

- 4.6 Delivery of NPR will encourage growth of travel by rail services and contribute to environmental targets through reduction in journeys by road.
- 4.7 Any specific environmental issues will be picked up in the development and delivery of individual infrastructure interventions.

Equality and Diversity

- 4.8 A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the type of work referenced however increased access to employment and other opportunities is one of the main benefits of NPR.

Consultations

- 4.9 TfN and the DfT have collaborated in developing the sponsorship agreement. The draft agreement has been shared with TfN partners for comment.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 There are no background papers.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix 1 - NPR co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding

| Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (<i>if applicable</i>) | |
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| a) TfN | <i>Transport for the North</i> |
| b) DfT | <i>Department for Transport</i> |
| c) HS2 | <i>High Speed 2</i> |