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**Meeting:** Transport for the North Board  
**Subject:** Northern Powerhouse Rail Co-Sponsorship  
**Author:** Jonathan Brown, Strategic Rail Lead  
**Sponsor:** Darren Oldham, Rail and Road Director  
**Meeting Date:** Thursday 22 June 2023

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**1. Purpose of the Report:**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the governance arrangements associated with Northern Powerhouse Rail and asks the Board to endorse 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 Board endorses the NPR co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding.

**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 was jointly led by Transport for the North and the Department for Transport (DfT) over a number of years operating as co-clients.
- 3.2 The Transport for the North Board agreed its preferred NPR network (NPR 'in full') in early 2021 and provided advice to the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 3.3 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 Transport for the North preferred network. It does, however, form a core which could be developed to a more extensive network over time. Indeed, the IRP sets out the principle of an 'adaptive pipeline': a reflection of the reality that major infrastructure projects evolve over the period of their development. By engaging in the co-sponsorship arrangement Transport for the North can continue to make the case for 'NPR in full,' whilst ensuring that the views of its partners continue to shape delivery of the funds allocated by Government through the IRP.
- 3.4 In this way it is possible for Transport for the North to continue to make the case for improved connectivity to Bradford and Hull, between Sheffield and Manchester and between Sheffield and Leeds. The latter is linked to the Leeds Area Study which has yet to commence. Transport for the North, with partners, continues to press the Department on the urgency of publishing the Terms of Reference for the Study, and once published, of taking forward the work at pace.
- 3.5 The evidence base underpinning the draft Strategic Transport Plan restates the need to fully complete NPR and HS2 as originally planned to achieve the maximum economic benefit to the North (and by extension to the UK). In this context it is important to note that the NPR co-sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding (referred to subsequently as the sponsorship agreement) provides for Transport for the North to conduct work looking at additional corridors – the 'adaptive pipeline approach.' Transport for the North has employed a small number of additional staff who are working alongside DfT colleagues to ensure

that the committed IRP schemes are optimised, and partners are kept involved and informed throughout their detailed development.

- 3.6 DfT became sole client for NPR on 1 April 2022 and several posts were transferred from Transport for the North to DfT to support this. The arrangements for co-sponsorship of NPR were agreed by the Transport for the North Board in March 2022. To formalise these, a sponsorship agreement has been jointly developed by Transport for the North and the DfT and is attached as Appendix 1. This agreement has recently been endorsed by Ministers and was presented to the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee on 2 March 2023.
- 3.7 The senior governance is provided by the NPR Sponsor Board. The Board is comprised of three named representatives from each of Transport for the North 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. Transport for the North 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.
- 3.8 The Sponsor Board's direct responsibility is oversight of 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 Transport for the North involvement with the Programme Boards for these individual elements, the Sponsor Board does give Transport for the North the opportunity to raise issues or concerns that arise from these 'Dependencies.' In addition, it is important to note that the arrangements in the sponsorship agreement do not restrict the ability of the Transport for the North Board to provide statutory advice to the Secretary of State.
- 3.9 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 Transport for the North and DfT governance. The views of Transport for the North Partner authorities on key issues have been sought prior to meetings of the Sponsor Board and fed in via Transport for the North representatives, with feedback provided to Partners after the meeting. In the last year, the level of partner, and Transport for the North, involvement in NPR has been limited, a reflection of the stage at which the development work is currently at and the change in roles. However, as work on the Business Case moves forward the level of engagement will increase noticeably limited as the NPR programme transitions into delivery. Transport for the North has additional resources (provided because of the sponsorship agreement) and will be working with DfT to support effective engagement.
- 3.10 The Board is asked to endorse the sponsorship agreement to maximise Transport for the North's influence on NPR with the framework of the committed IRP scheme. The sponsor agreement is important in formalising Transport for the North's future role on NPR. It defines the 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. Funding for the co-sponsorship function has been included in Transport for the North's budget.

### ***Resource Implications***

- 4.2 There are no new resourcing implications as a result of this report. Additional resources have been put in place in line reflecting the agreement and budget.

### ***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 is asked to endorse. 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 Transport for the North's corporate risk register. The sponsorship agreement provides sufficient safeguards for this risk to be managed so that Transport for the North 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 Transport for the North and the DfT have collaborated in developing the sponsorship agreement. The draft agreement has been shared with Transport for the North partners for comment.
- 4.10 The Sponsor Agreement was presented to the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee on 2 March 2023. There were no substantive issues raised.

## **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**

a) DfT	Department for Transport
b) NPR	Northern Powerhouse Rail

**Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used**

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|---------------|-----------------------------|
| c) <i>HS2</i> | <i>High Speed 2</i>         |
| d) <i>IRP</i> | <i>Integrated Rail Plan</i> |