
Meeting: Rail North Committee Consultation Call
Subject: Rail Accessibility Task and Finish Group
Author: David Worsley, Rail Strategy Manager
Sponsor: Darren Oldham, Rail and Road Director
Meeting Date: Tuesday, 14 November 2023

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 This paper is intended to establish the terms of reference and composition of a Task and Finish Group to examine the issue of accessibility at the North's railway stations, as agreed at the Rail North Committee meeting on Wednesday 13 September 2023.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Rail North Committee approves:
- i. The formation of a Task and Finish Group (i.e. a member working group) to oversee progress on the issue of accessibility
 - ii. The composition of the working group; namely:
 - 1 Rail North Committee member from each of the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber
 - Supported by:
 - Transport for the North's Rail Strategy Manager
 - 1 representative from a relevant Train Operating Company
 - 1 representative from Rail North Partnership
 - 1 expert representative from an organisation representing the interests of passengers with reduced mobility
 - 1 representative from Network Rail and/or Great British Railways Transition Team
 - iii) The following objectives for the member working group:
 - Develop a detailed proposition for the future of accessibility at the North's railway stations, for approval at a future Rail North Committee meeting
 - Support this proposition with a timeline and action plan.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 The poor state of accessibility at the North's railway stations has been highlighted in Transport for the North's recent strategy documents, such as the *Strategic Transport Plan* (p. 124) and *Strategic Rail Report* (Ch. 7). The deficiencies in facilities that would enable inclusive accessibility include inconsistencies in the provision of customer information systems, public address systems, accessible shelters, ticket vending machines, help points, tactile paving and induction loops (among other items). At the Rail North Committee meeting on 13 September 2023, the committee was particularly concerned about the absence of step-free access to all areas at approximately half of the North's stations.
- 3.2 There has been some helpful work done in this area in recent years which can inform the work of the Task and Finish Group. Transport for the North's *Northern England Station Enhancements Programme: Strategic Outline Business Case* of May 2022 (NESEP) demonstrated that there is a good economic case for a

comprehensive programme of stations facilities improvements across the North. Meanwhile, Northern Trains have been developing their "Stations as a Place" initiative, which examines how stations contribute to their local area's "sense of place"; this includes some consideration of accessibility issues.

3.3 In order to progress the objectives described above, the Task and Finish Group will have to take account of these workstreams, and other work being undertaken by Network Rail and Train Operating Companies.

3.4 It should also be noted that the industry's equality duty to improve accessibility relates not just to disability, but to all of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act of 2010. Age is also a protected characteristic and the same accessibility issues will apply, for elderly individuals and individuals who have physical impairments. Inclusive accessibility must also involve consideration of safety and security (at the station, on the train and during the first and last mile), and integration with other modes of transport.

4. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications for Transport for the North relating to this report.

Resource Implications

4.2 There are no direct resourcing implications to Transport for the North as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

4.3 Legal implications are included within the report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.4 Transport for the North is currently managing two corporate risks which relate to this report. Risk 298, Transport for the North might be unable to make a timely, robust, credible, evidence-based case for investment in transport. Risk 309, the pandemic has changed travel patterns and behaviours and therefore service and investment decisions will need to reflect new markets and emerging evidence of demand.

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 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or EIA. Addressing accessibility of public transport is a fundamental building block of inclusive transport decarbonisation, the focus for Transport for the North within its emerging STP and Decarbonisation Strategy update.

Equality and Diversity

4.6 A full Impact Assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this initial paper. However, because the purpose of this workstream is to improve the inclusivity of the North's railway through better inclusive accessibility at stations, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

Consultations

4.7 Transport for the North's partners were consulted as part of the research for the *Northern England Station Enhancements Programme* in 2022.

5. Background Papers:

5.1 There are no background papers for this report.

6. Appendices:

6.1 There are no appendices for this report.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used

a) DfT	Department for Transport
b) NESEP	Northern England Station Enhancements Programme
c) STP	Strategic Transport Plan
d) TPE	TransPennine Express