

**Williams Rail Review: Call for Evidence****The Combined Authority's initial submission to the Williams review of the UK Rail Industry**

1. **The chaos unleashed on passengers and the economy since May 2018 confirms that the current UK organisational and commercial railway frameworks are not working for our region.** As a founding member of Rail North and Transport for the North, West Yorkshire Combined Authority welcomes the Williams Rail Review as the catalyst for the fundamental shift that is needed in the way the rail network works for passengers and for the country.
2. **The railway should be much more focussed on delivering the service that customers want.** A reformed framework is urgently needed to ensure customers (passengers and freight) in all parts of the UK receive a level of service comparable to the best in the world. Structures should be re-configured in a way that places the delivery and planning of current and future rail services (and requisite infrastructure) to the customer at the heart of everything. Devolution of the decision-making levers and accountability for rail outcomes to locally elected Members is needed.
3. **The railway should not exist in a bubble, and requires urgent reform so that it provides the mobility that our society needs, equally well across the country.** To deliver a railway that can support our objectives for sustainable, inclusive, economic growth, our region needs greater devolution of decision making powers about rail outcomes to the sub-national and local levels where the requirements for and impact of those outcomes are best understood.
4. **The north of England needs a railway structure that supports the 'Northern Powerhouse' programme of regeneration and rebalancing through investment, which should primarily be about providing a service to customers and society, with profit being a second order priority.** Following decades of under-investment, the north of England is engaged in a multi-generational programme of economic re-balancing. We need a railway that is focussed on this long term mission, and which is affordable to all in society. The current system is not delivering with conflicting objectives and drivers.
5. **The railway network is a system. We need a railway framework with aligned objectives, structures and organisational/commercial models.** We need a railway structure that treats the network as a system that can get the basics right, but which is also focussed on the delivery of growth in demand for, and improvement of, the passenger and freight railway.
6. **Rail franchising is not working for our region.** Alternative approaches are needed that integrate track and train, and that deliver the services that our region and customers actually want, now and in the future.
7. **The railway needs to be totally accountable to democratically elected government at national and sub-national levels for rail outcomes.** There needs to be a clear, golden-thread of transparent accountability between the strategic objectives for rail set and agreed between national, sub-national and local politicians, and the ultimate service delivered and decisions made day to day by the rail industry, to and on behalf of customers.
8. **The railway needs to be open for business.** As a third party investor in the railway with a planned rail investment portfolio currently worth £250m, we often find the railway hard to do business with.