

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 27 June 2019

Subject: **Rail Reviews**

Director: Dave Pearson, Director, Transport Services

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	N/A

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the West Yorkshire Combined Authority with an update on the rail reviews. An update is provided on the work Richard George has been undertaking in the wake of the May 2018 timetable chaos, together with an update on the Blake Jones Review and responses to the Williams Review of Rail.

2. Information

Richard George commission

- 2.1 Richard George is an independent adviser appointed by Government to re-establish a stable railway operation across the North following the breakdown in the system after the May 2018 timetable was introduced. An update on his work was reported to the Combined Authority meeting on 25 April 2019 (see also 'Background Documents'). Richard attended the TfN Rail North Committee on 14 May 2019 to provide a final summary of the work he has undertaken since summer 2018, and his overall findings. The Committee acknowledged the positive and welcome contribution of Richard's role and his analysis of the issues.

- 2.2 Richard George was invited to attend this meeting of the Combined Authority, but is unavailable due to holidays. A meeting has been arranged with him and available members of the Combined Authority week commencing 24 June 2019 to provide a personal update and to offer the opportunity for discussion.
- 2.3 Richard's appointment has now concluded. A number of his short-term recommendations have been implemented. This includes taking a more disciplined approach to train dispatch and better joint working between train operators' teams and the Network Rail team at Manchester Piccadilly. Others are now programmed, such as minor works to reposition on-platform equipment to speed up train dispatch. It is widely accepted that these actions are fostering a better way of working between different players responsible for the reliable delivery of rail services in the North.
- 2.4 Many of the wider and long-term issues raised by Richard George have framed the findings of the Blake Jones Review and framed responses to the Williams Rail Review, and have underpinned (for example) the objectives of Network Rail's recent reorganisation.
- 2.5 It is understood that a final report of Richard's work will be published shortly, subject to DfT sign-off. This will set out the full details of the findings and responses to the issues raised, and provide a basis for monitoring progress.

The Rail North Partnership "Blake Jones" Review

- 2.6 The introduction of the May 2018 rail timetable changes in the North led to severe disruption for passengers and businesses. Cllr Blake on behalf of TfN and, the Minister for Rail at the Department for Transport (DfT) undertook a joint TfN/DfT Review into the issues, "The Rail North Partnership Review". A small review team was established consisting of officials from TfN, DfT and West Yorkshire Combined Authority and views were obtained from Local Transport Authorities in the North, LEPs, Transport Focus, train operators, TfN, DfT and the Rail North Partnership.
- 2.7 The Review is expected to be published in June and is anticipated to identify four key areas of change:
- A focus on passengers
 - Improved accountability
 - Better communications and greater transparency
 - Improved trust and responsiveness
- 2.8 The review will make recommendations which will inform an implementation plan of actions which will be taken forward under the current existing partnership and franchise provisions to ensure clear political oversight of key decisions made about the North's railways. The Review will also make specific recommendations to the review into the structure of the rail industry led by Keith Williams.

2.9 The findings of the Blake Jones Review have also influenced the TfN and West Yorkshire Combined Authority responses to the Williams Rail Review to ensure that the future structure of the rail industry responds to the need for a coherent and locally accountable approach to the operation of our railways.

Williams Rail Review

2.10 The Combined Authority's first submission to the review was submitted in January 2019, and agreed by the Combined Authority meeting on 14 February 2019. This highlighted that the current organisational and commercial railway frameworks are not working for our region.

2.11 The Combined Authority submitted its second response to the Williams Rail Review call for evidence at the end of April 2019. A copy of this submission is attached at Appendix 1, which has also informed the Combined Authority's contribution to the Transport for the North submission.

2.12 With reference to what is required from a future model for the railway, the Combined Authority's second response set out the need for:

- clarity of objectives for the railway: social, economic, and environmental and permeating the railway from top to bottom;
- network outputs driven by these objectives (without conflicting incentives);
- value for money in day-to-day operation and in delivery of new infrastructure;
- a coordinated and integrated rail system with a 'controlling mind' with clear lines for influence and accountability;
- a railway operationally independent of government (but accountable to it nationally and regionally), with a focus on investing in skills and research; and
- devolution to ensure that objectives reflect local priorities and conditions, with accountability to those most affected by the railway.

2.13 Transport for the North's submission is largely consistent in terms of an analysis of the issues with the current structure of the railway. It calls for a strengthened role for TfN in the management of the railway, with a 'concession' model for service operation with the potential for smaller-units of direct local control or a greater local role in service specification. TfN would manage the interfaces between these local operations / specifications and inter-regional services. The TfN proposition also suggests greater influence over the rail network, in line with the objectives of the Strategic Transport Plan and Investment Programme.

2.14 However, the TfN proposition is due to be discussed at the TfN Board meeting on 20 June 2019, and will be subject to further review in light of the Blake Jones recommendations and outcomes of the Williams Review.

2.15 The Williams Rail Review's findings and recommendations are due to be published in a government white paper in autumn 2019. Reform is then expected to begin in 2020.

3. Inclusive Growth Implications

3.1 There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report. An important objective of the Combined Authority's contribution to the rail reviews has been to ensure that rail performs a role as part of the transport mix that maximises its contribution to our inclusive growth ambitions.

4. Financial Implications

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

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6. Staffing Implications

6.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

7. External Consultees

7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That the Combined Authority notes the discussion with Richard George following the conclusion of his appointment.

8.2 That the Combined Authority notes the update on the Blake Jones Review.

8.3 That the Combined Authority endorses the final submission to the Williams Rail Review.

9. Background Documents

9.1 Summary of Richard George findings and recommendations. Contained in **Item 5** – West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 25 April 2019. Available via: <http://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk>

9.2 Report of Richard George commission and findings. **Item 11** – West Yorkshire Transport Committee, 15 March 2019. Available via: <http://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk>

- 9.3 Richard George Update report. **Appendix 1** to Item 9 – Transport for the North Board meeting, 7 February 2019. Available via:
www.transportforthenorth.com/meetings
- 9.4 West Yorkshire Combined Authority’s first response to the Williams Rail Review call for evidence. **Appendix 1** to Item 5 – West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 14 February 2019. Available via:
<http://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk>

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Williams Rail Review: Second Call for Evidence – Objectives and Assessment Criteria - Submission of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority