

Union Connectivity Review: Call for Evidence – Response of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), working in partnership with the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP), operates to ensure that our region is recognised globally as a strong, successful economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers, and lives. We bring together local councils and businesses to achieve this vision, so that everyone in our region can benefit from economic prosperity and a modern, accessible transport network. In this context, the City Region is defined as encompassing the districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

1. If you represent a place, what is your current strategy for growing the economy and improving the quality of life there? Please provide a summary, but you are welcome to append or link to published strategies.

The economic strategy of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is set out in our Strategic Economic Framework (SEF)¹ and focuses on the need to provide productive economic growth that is environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive, while leading to improvements in both standard of living and quality of life, with a specific focus on addressing areas and parts of society that suffer particular deprivation. All of this is in the context of the climate emergency declared in 2019 and our commitment to being a net zero-carbon region by 2038.

a) What is necessary to achieve this strategy and what evidence do you have that improved connectivity is needed in this instance? We expect that transport is not the only factor necessary to achieve regional strategies and would like to understand what else might need to be in place to see benefits from improvements in connectivity.

The SEF identifies “delivering 21st-century transport” as being one of the five keys to delivering this strategy, alongside:

- Boosting productivity;
- Tackling the climate emergency;
- Enabling inclusive growth; and
- Securing money and powers

The SEP makes clear that these four elements are mutually supporting and mutually interdependent.

2. Please provide any information you hold about current multi-nation journeys within the United Kingdom.

Please provide information relating to current journey volumes, assessments of future demand, journey reliability and locations/corridors of particular strategic importance. In particular, please provide information about current journey levels, assessments of future demand, locations of important strategic transport corridors and the reasons for importance

A reasonable, albeit imperfect, proxy for the strength of current trading relationships can be found by analysing the patterns and volumes of goods moved by road. Such data is available from DfT sources² at a Region level, and for Yorkshire & Humberside shows the following, with the values for the North-West, South-East and England as a whole included by way of context:

	Internal trade as % of total	% of external UK trade (not of total trade)		
		Scotland	Wales	N Ireland
Y&H	64.9%	5.3%	3.5%	1.8%
NW	60.7%	10.7%	10.7%	1.5%
SE	64.0%	1.7%	4.3%	0%
England	91.5%	37.8%	55.1%	7.1%

It should be noted that this does not include any international trade, i.e. with non-UK partners. “External UK trade” means all movements within the UK other than those within the region itself, e.g. Yorkshire & Humberside to/from everywhere outside that region. It is considered likely that passenger business travel will tend to track along similar (though not identical) lines.

¹ <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/growing-the-economy/strategic-economic-framework/>

² Goods Lifted data from <http://www.dft.gov.uk/statistics/series/road-freight/>. The values are averages of incoming and outgoing traffic.

It can be seen that most regions are fairly “self-sufficient” in the sense that the bulk (over 60%) of movements are within the region itself, as might be expected. For external trade, in the Yorkshire & Humberside case, the main partners within England are the East Midlands and the North-West, reflecting the proximity and economic mass of those neighbouring regions. Patterns for the North-West are broadly similar, with again neighbouring regions predominating. However, one striking difference is apparent: the North-West has over double the trade (even more in absolute tonnage terms) with Scotland than Yorkshire & Humberside does, and the difference is even greater for Wales.

The North-West is clearly a comparable distance to Scotland as against Yorkshire & Humberside, but it is suggested that one significant factor in the apparent underperformance of the latter is transport connectivity. The most populated and industrialised parts of Scotland are the Central Belt and Glasgow area – the North-West is connected to these by the six-lane M6 motorway and the West Coast Mainline (including electrified links to Manchester and Liverpool). From much of Yorkshire & Humberside, in contrast, the links are relatively tenuous, being via the inferior A1 road and the East Coast Mainline, the latter having few direct trains to Glasgow and Central Belt locations west of Edinburgh (and the Leeds – York link not being electrified). Leeds – Glasgow is particularly poor by both road and rail.

One would expect Yorkshire & Humberside to have less trade with Wales than the North-West does, as a simple product of distance; however, the magnitude of the difference appears unexpectedly great – this is believed to be in large part a product of the “Pennine effect”: the poor transport links via the congested M62 motorway and underdeveloped trans-Pennine rail lines are a recognised barrier to economic relationships flourishing across the Pennines.

Trade with Northern Ireland is relatively modest, it can be seen, reflecting the obvious physical and distance barriers.

In the context of sustainable clean growth and the move to a post-carbon economy, the development of higher-performing rail links is taking centre-stage, in order to develop new economic links and to achieve modal shift from less sustainable modes of passenger and freight transport such as road and air.

Evidence of the significance of the passenger flows between West Yorkshire and, in particular, Cardiff and Glasgow (alongside Edinburgh) is corroborated by Network Rail’s 2013 Long-Distance Market Study³, which highlighted their significance and the case for through journey opportunities with average end-to-end speeds of over 80 or 100mph, which in the case of Cardiff and Glasgow are at present far from being delivered.

As described, at present the rail main connection between our region and **Scotland** is via ECML⁴. A third of the UK population lives within 20 minutes of an ECML station, and together they deliver 41% of the UK’s GDP. However, the route suffers capacity, journey-time and performance issues:

- A technical report commissioned by DfT (2013) suggested emerging capacity issues on ECML. (The actual capacity problem could be understated, as most of the ECML projects assumed did not complete as planned).
- The capacity issues are evident in sub-optimal stopping patterns (i.e. station stops cannot be optimised to match demand).
- ORR have been faced with “difficult decisions” on ECML about open-access operators, and Network Rail similarly with the sale of access rights, all suggesting demand to run more services than currently possible.
- The line is prone to significant disruption: in 2018, 12 major incidents occurred costing the UK economy £46.28 million. Smaller incidents can also cause significant disruption across the rail network (impacts of delays in Edinburgh have been identified as far away as Manchester); if the number of delays on the line of over 10 minutes were halved, this would deliver an additional £62.8 million per annum to the wider economy.

The other principal rail route from the West Yorkshire area to Scotland is that from Leeds and Bradford to Carlisle via Settle and on to Glasgow by one of two existing routes. Since having been saved from closure

³ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Long-distance-market-study-2013-1-1.pdf>

⁴ The information in this section has been primarily sourced from the East Coast Mainline Authorities - [Invest East Coast Rail – East Coast Main Line \(investineastcoast.co.uk\)](http://investineastcoast.co.uk)

in the 1980s, the now famous Settle – Carlisle line has seen a spectacular reversal in its fortunes in terms of its profile and traffic levels, both passenger and freight. However, it has significant untapped potential:

- The line would offer a substantially shorter and potentially much faster route between West Yorkshire and Glasgow / the Central Belt, as compared against travelling via York, Newcastle and Edinburgh
- However, it is currently limited to a top speed of only 60mph, despite engineered to a high standard and designed for significantly higher speeds
- There are at present no through services across Carlisle: interchange is needed travel on to Scotland

There appears therefore to be a potential low-cost “quick win” available in terms of upgrading the speeds on this line and introducing a Leeds – Carlisle – Glasgow service, contributing to a significant reduction in the transport barriers between West Yorkshire and the Central Belt.

Turning to **Wales**, there are at present no scheduled direct train services at all between West Yorkshire and anywhere in Wales. While access to the important tourist economy centres of North Wales has recently been somewhat improved by the introduction of a new direct (albeit fairly slow) Leeds / Bradford – Chester service, reaching the major South Wales conurbation centred on Cardiff requires an interchange at one of several intermediate stations, and is not particularly fast or attractive. Noting that Leeds at present only has one Cross-Country train per hour, there would appear to be obvious scope for an additional train to operate between West Yorkshire and South Wales, serving important and currently underserved intermediate markets en route. Beyond this, improved trans-Pennine links are needed to reduce journey times to North Wales and provide adequate high-quality freight paths on the network: for these reasons, in the shorter term the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade needs to be delivered as a priority, and to include full electrification and freight gauge-clearance, as well as sufficient paths to allow the freight markets to develop. This should be followed by the electrification of the crucial Calder Valley trans-Pennine route (again with freight clearance). In the longer term, further increases in capacity and decreases in journey / shipping times should be delivered via Northern Powerhouse Rail in the form of a new line from Leeds to Manchester and Liverpool via Bradford.

While the economic links between West Yorkshire and **Northern Ireland** are not at present major as measured by volumes of freight moved by road, maintaining the United Kingdom as a coherent and economically integrated entity at a time of a movement away from carbon-intensive transport raises special challenges for connectivity across the Irish Sea: at present, passenger connectivity is heavily reliant on aviation, with freight overwhelmingly by lorry and roll-on / roll-off ferry. Whilst ferries are relatively energy- and carbon-efficient, there is clear scope here for rail to play an enhanced role in both passenger and freight markets. To do so would require a number of interventions – which notably would also benefit a wide variety of other rail markets too:

- Significant upgrades of trans-Pennine rail routes – as with North Wales, in the short term via the full delivery the Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade and the electrification of the Calder Valley line; and in the longer term the creation of new capacity and delivery of far better passenger journey times and freight shipping speeds via Northern Powerhouse Rail
- Capacity upgrades to rail facilities at Liverpool’s docks
- Upgrades to linespeeds and electrification on the routes through Chester and on to Holyhead, including freight gauge-clearance as needed
- Improved integration for passengers at major ferry terminals such as Liverpool and Holyhead
- Optimised freight handling facilities (such as intermodal terminals) at ferry terminals

In addition, should the Stranraer / Cairnryan area remain an important base for Irish Sea ferries (such as to Larne), then the improvements discussed above to the Leeds – Settle – Carlisle route would also potentially benefit links to Northern Ireland via these routes. This is however subject to the challenge of the lack of a direct rail route at present between Carlisle / Dumfries and Stranraer, and the ferries’ current use of Cairnryan which, unlike Stranraer, is remote from the rail network.

It is important to note that interventions of this nature would also massively benefit *transit* freight – that is, movements from (especially) the East Coast ports towards Northern Ireland (and the Republic) which pass through West Yorkshire and across the Pennines, at present overwhelmingly via the M62 motorway.

3. In general terms, is there a need for new or improved transport links between the nations of the United Kingdom?

If so, please explain why and provide evidence to support your view. Please ensure that your response relates specifically to multi-nation transport links and not to improvements in connectivity in general.

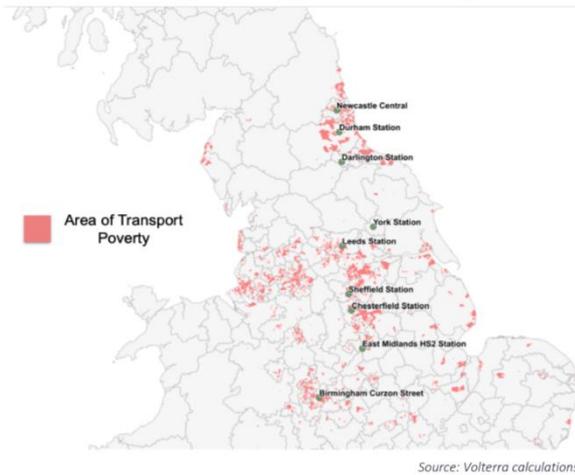
There is some overlap with our answer to the previous question: please see above. We believe that the evidence demonstrates that poor transport links from West Yorkshire are a significant factor in holding back the development of economic links between our region and the other nations within the UK, and indeed more widely – and that the impacts of the climate emergency and the need to move away from carbon-intensive modes of passenger and freight transport risk only heightening that disadvantage in the coming years. To avert this disadvantage, investment in improved links by efficient, high-capacity and non-carbon transport is essential – in practice, for many of the most important links within the scope of this study, this means an emphasis on rail.

Because of the nature of rail transport networks, it should be emphasised that there are very strong synergy effects in properly targeted upgrade investments, including those outside the immediate scope of this Review: for example, upgrading trans-Pennine links will benefit this region's connectivity to Wales and Northern Ireland – but will also greatly help links to the North-West and to Ireland too. Similarly, the delivery of HS2 Phase 2B (eastern leg) will benefit connectivity to Scotland, but also southwards to London and the South-East and, if implemented correctly, links to the Continent.

Of critical importance to improving connectivity between West Yorkshire (as well as London, East Midlands and the Sheffield City Region) and Scotland is the delivery of HS2 Phase 2B East. The development work of HS2 Phase 2b East is now paused until the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). While we welcome the development of an IRP, in our view the eastern leg of HS2 should be delivered at the same time as the western leg and in full. The case for HS2 East includes the need for greatly improved connections to and from Scotland, but is not limited to it:

- **Economic impact:** 13m people will benefit from HS2 Phase 2B East. This is 20% of the UK's population and larger than Greater London or the entire economy of Denmark. Every year the eastern leg of HS2 is delayed, it costs the Leeds City region economy £1.7 billion; it costs the three eastern regions' economies £4.9billion.
- **Productivity and "Levelling-up":** Regions along the eastern leg are far behind the capital when it comes to productivity, making us the most geographically unequal country in the developed world. Yorkshire, the North East, and the East Midlands have the lowest productivity levels of all regions in England, over 30% below the London levels, and Eastern regions have 22% lower productivity than the UK average. Notably, transport investment in these Eastern regions lags 33% below UK national average and 21% below the western regions. In the last decade, the Eastern Leg authorities have faced a transport investment deficit of £58 billion when compared to spending levels per person within London. The Government Office for Science (2019) report identifies that transport poverty is strongly correlated with social disadvantage. Delivery of HS2 eastern leg will support inclusive growth for some of the most economically deprived areas of the country (see transport poverty map below), and addressing these inequalities should be at the heart of Government's "levelling-up" agenda.

Eastern Leg Transport Poverty



In 2019, companies in the Eastern Leg area exported £59 billion, 22% of England's exports. Delivering transport investments will provide better access to international markets for British businesses. It is estimated that in total the HS2 eastern leg alone will contribute an additional £4.2bn per annum to the economic output of the eastern leg regions. This would correspond to a 1.5% increase in total economic output for the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the East Midlands combined.

- **Post-Covid recovery:** our region, and the wider North, is being hard hit by the pandemic, both in virus terms and the impact on the economy. Accelerating infrastructure, including HS2 East, is vital for economic recovery and restoring business confidence. Regional growth strategies will deliver in excess of 150,000 additional jobs (more than 50,000 jobs will be created for Leeds City region by 2050).
- **Capacity:** Transport for the North's work has confirmed that a new 2-track railway is required between Leeds and Sheffield for capacity reasons alone. Both TfN and WYCA's infrastructure studies suggest that 2 additional tracks are required from Leeds to York – the single critical connection from West Yorkshire to the North-East and Scotland. The most appropriate way to provide much of this is by the use of the section of the York branch of HS2 East from the Garforth area towards York (i.e. HS2 Garforth touch point). It can be seen that HS2 East is a critical enabler of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). Similarly, Midlands Connect will require additional tracks between Sheffield and the Midlands. Taken together, this suggests that almost all of the routing of HS2 eastern leg would be required in some shape or form. If HS2 eastern leg were not built, something else will be needed over the vast majority of its route, and the piecemeal (re-)development of route options would cause further delay and may lead to inferior ultimate outcomes.

There is a direct and natural synergy between HS2 East and the overdue investments to upgrade the East Coast Mainline to carry HS2 traffic, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Anglo-Scottish intercity passenger and freight alongside the other vital functions this artery performs. Without all of these complementary investment, connectivity between West Yorkshire and Scotland will remain hampered and our economy will continue to underperform and not to meet the real-world needs of travellers and freight shippers. These components therefore all need to be delivered, and delivered on the basis of holistic and coordinated planning that is in the spirit of putting the passenger (and the freight customer) first, and so applying the principles recognised in the Blake-Jones review as essential to achieving the real progress we need.

Looking more widely at connectivity to the constituent nations of the UK from West Yorkshire, it has been shown above that poor transport connectivity is a factor holding back the development of trading links and therefore economic prosperity, and that the sub-standard passenger and freight rail links in particular are a particular issue in terms of moving to the post-carbon economy.

4. What are the main obstacles and challenges in improving transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?

Please provide evidence relating to any specific challenges that prevent or hinder the development of additional or improved transport links. Please consider socio-economic, political, organisational and practical issues.

One of the main challenges in improving transport connectivity between our region and the other nations of the UK has been a continuing **lack of government commitment** to essential rail investment programmes. For example:

- As described previously, **HS2** has been subject to numerous reviews and other delays, and this delays the realisation of benefits and undermines investors' confidence.
- In June 2018, the Government announced £780 million of investment for the **East Coast Main Line** in Control Period 6 (2019-2024), which will reduce journey times on key flows and provide new direct links to some cities and towns. However, the majority of the development work will be completed by 2021, with no current plans for further improvements or resources to fund them. This follows from the non-delivery of, or delays to, schemes on the ECML which should have been delivered during CP5 (2014-2019). All of these are badly needed to address capacity pinchpoints, upgrade power supplies to minimise reliance on carbon fuels, improve journey times, and address reliability and punctuality issues.
- Electrification and upgrading of the **main Trans-Pennine Diggle Line**, the main rail link from West Yorkshire towards North Wales and Ireland / Northern Ireland, has been proposed since at least the 1990s, but has been subject to repeated delay. There is still no Government commitment to delivering this scheme in full and, critically, to ensuring that it takes the form of a fully electrified railway with sufficient capacity and capability to convey the freight traffic required alongside a step-change in passenger connectivity.
- Rail connectivity between West Yorkshire and the South Wales area is largely dependent on the **main Cross-Country rail route** via Sheffield, Derby and Birmingham. Unfortunately this line has only had limited investment as regards journey times for passenger trains, and uses rolling stock with limited capacity and a poor passenger ambience. Government has sadly not delivered on earlier commitments to electrify the route, hampering productivity in both passenger and freight transport. There is no commitment to providing a link in the Midlands to allow HS2 trains to travel from West Yorkshire and the North-East onto the classic network towards the South-West and South Wales.

Beyond this, a clear and ever-increasing challenge to improving (or even maintaining) connectivity between West Yorkshire and the other nations of the UK is the overwhelming **dependence on carbon energy** sources in the form of road freight, car, aviation and diesel rail transport. This cannot be sustained. It cannot be acceptable for the move away from carbon-intensive lifestyles to entail a reduction in our connectivity (and ability to trade) with these other nations. The only way to maintain and enhance these links will be to invest in the right technologies – while there will be a mix, electrified rail is by far the best placed in terms of proven maturity of technology, operating efficiency, cost-effectiveness, economic advantage and deliverability.

5. What evidence exists to demonstrate the potential impacts of improved transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?

Please ensure that your answer relates directly to transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom and not to transport connectivity in general. Please consider economic, social and cultural impacts and provide documents or links. Please also highlight specific potential growth areas such as housing or wages.

A significant body of evidence has been compiled to support the case for investment in the East Coast Mainline, in HS2 Phase 2b East, and in Northern Powerhouse Rail, which together demonstrates in a compelling way the potential impacts of improved transport connectivity and the case for change. This evidence includes:

- Volterra Partners' report: *The case for an integrated new rail network serving the Eastern Leg*⁵
- HS2 East prospectus: *The case for HS2 East*⁶
- HS2 East report: *Mind the gap: The role of HS2's Eastern Leg in bridging England's east-west divide*⁷
- Invest East Coast Rail prospectus: *The case for investment in the East Coast Main Line*⁸

⁵ <https://www.hs2east.co.uk/data/ckeditor/brochure/Volterra-HS2-Eastern-Leg-NICInput-REISSUE-1.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.hs2east.co.uk/data/ckeditor/brochure/HS2-East-Prospectus-v1-0.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.hs2east.co.uk/data/ckeditor/brochure/hs2-east-mind-the-gap-september-2020.pdf>

⁸ <https://investineastcoast.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ECMA-Research-doc.pdf>

- Transport for the North: *The Potential of Northern Powerhouse Rail*⁹
- Leeds City Region: *HS2 Growth Strategy*¹⁰

6. When making transport investment decisions which aim to improve connectivity between the different nations of the United Kingdom, does the current appraisal framework capture all the potential impacts?

Please provide evidence such as links to existing reviews or analysis that may have already considered this.

As we understand it, the National Infrastructure Commission has developed its own bespoke methodology for assessing the impacts of its alternative packages of rail interventions, as part of its Rail Needs Assessment. This methodology does not include the outcomes from the HS2 Growth Strategies developed by local partners with support from Government over a number of years. These Growth Strategies set out plans and proposals for thousands of new jobs and new homes around the Eastern Leg stations. The public and private sectors have already invested significantly in these locations in the expectation that HS2 will be delivered. The NIC's report, which appears not to recognise the full benefits of HS2 East, risks further undermining investor confidence at a time when the economy reeling from the impact of the pandemic.

Transport for the North have also tried to develop more "holistic" methods of appraising the benefits of schemes with transformative impacts on how places interact – above all, in the context of Northern Powerhouse Rail. This includes forecasts of future travel patterns as well as the appraisal of the benefits that result. However, at present they remain heavily constrained by national guidance on investment appraisal.

More generally, there is an increasing recognition that the existing investment appraisal framework as embodied in the Treasury Green Book has failed to serve the country well. In particular:

- It biases towards schemes in areas that already have good connectivity (often London and the South-East) and away from those suffering disadvantage and deprivation
- Linked to the above, it is socially regressive and fails to capture transformational impacts
- It fails to capture the imperatives of the climate emergency and the transition to a post-carbon economy
- It encourages a misuse of, or an overreliance on, simplistic quantified benefit:cost ratios as representing a business case rather than as one of several methods of comparing elements of business cases

In this context, the Chancellor's recent announcement of reforms to the Green Book is to be warmly welcomed, although it remains to be seen how fully they will in practice address these issues.

7. Which specific journeys would benefit from new or improved transport links?

Please identify two or more specific points within the United Kingdom for each journey and provide details as to why each journey has been identified. Please list these journeys in order of priority. Please ensure that these journeys traverse two or more nations. If none than please go to Question 8.

a) What would be the benefits of improvements to these specific journeys?

Please provide evidence of the benefit that these proposed improvements would deliver. Please consider wider economic, social and cultural benefits as well as specific areas such as potential improvements in housing and productivity.

b) Are you aware of any work that has been done to assess the need or feasibility of improvements to all or part of these specific journeys?

Please provide evidence.

c) How would the costs and benefits of the identified improvements be distributed?

Please consider the economic, social and geographic distribution of these costs and benefits and provide evidence to support this.

d) How will demand for these journeys change in the future?

Please consider the next 20-30 years in your response and set out the reasons why demand will change. Please also consider the potential impact of COVID-19 and the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

e) In your opinion what is the preferred means by which to improve these journeys?

Please consider specific transport modes i.e. rail, road, air and maritime and details of any new infrastructure requirements. Please also consider whether there is an opportunity to promote active travel such as walking or cycling or environmentally friendly modes of transport.

⁹ https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Potential-of-NPR_TfN-web.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/improving-transport/leeds-city-region-hs2-growth-strategy/>

f) What would be the environmental impact of improving these journeys in the way that you have identified?

Please consider positive and negative impacts as well as possible mitigations. Please do this in the context of the United Kingdom's domestic and international targets for greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and provide evidence.

g) Are there any interdependencies with other policies that may impact the deliverability of the identified improvements?

Please consider all relevant national and regional policies as well as those set by devolved administrations and provide your assessment as to how these policies may need to change to facilitate delivery of the identified improvements.

We have chosen four example journeys in order to illustrate these points. The West Yorkshire starting (or destination) points could be taken as Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield or any other centre in the region – the point is that in a well-functioning network all such locations would be equally well connected to the UK-wide transport system. Because we consider some of the critical points to be common to all four, we have answered these separately below the following table, taking all journeys together. It will be noted that, for the reasons above, we have placed significant emphasis on rail (and, where appropriate, sea) connectivity.

Journey	(b) Need	(d) Demand trends	(e) Mode	Rationale & improvement opportunities
Cardiff	NR LDMS ¹¹	252% 2012 to 2043 ¹²	Intercity Rail	Rationale: see no.1 above. In the short/medium term, there is a good case for a new direct rail service bolstering existing connectivity between WY and the Midlands, and providing a new direct link to the South Wales conurbation. In the longer term, a link from HS2 to the classic network would enable radically better cross-country journey times making rail truly competitive with car (and air where relevant) for journeys to both south-west England and south Wales
Belfast	Evidence of climate impacts of existing transport modes	Not known, but driven by modal shift from carbon-intensive modes and by maintaining / increasing pan-UK trade and leisure-economy links	Intercity rail and ferry	Linkages to the principal English ports serving Northern Ireland (principally Liverpool) would be radically improved by the delivery of modernisation of the vital Trans-Pennine rail links – in the short term, via the overdue Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU), and then by Northern Powerhouse Rail, which will further improve journey times and enable a step-change in capacity for freight. To unlock the impacts of these for the Northern Irish market, integration with ferries at Liverpool should be improved in terms of physical linkages, journey times, ticketing, and the passenger experience. Links to the island of Ireland via Holyhead would also benefit from these trans-Pennine interventions. Links via south-west Scotland could potentially also benefit from improvements targeting the WY – Glasgow market.
Edinburgh	NR LDMS, IEC ¹³ NPR ¹⁴	175% 2012 to 2043 ¹⁵	Intercity rail	Northern Powerhouse Rail, HS2 East and improvements to the East Coast Mainline are along this corridor inseparable and mutually interdependent: all are of equal and overwhelming importance to ensure that zero-carbon electric rail is the natural choice for journeys to Edinburgh, with journey times that foster economic linkages (while also benefitting links with North-East England). They must unlock capacity between Leeds and York, and northwards along the full length of the ECML, and enable significant cuts in journey times.

¹¹ Network Rail Long-Distance Market Study: *ibid.*

¹² NR LDMS, *ibid.*

¹³ Invest East Coast, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Northern Powerhouse Rail (Transport for the North), *ibid.*

¹⁵ NR LDMS, *ibid.*

Journey	(b) Need	(d) Demand trends	(e) Mode	Rationale & improvement opportunities
Glasgow	NR LDMS, WYCA strategy ¹⁶	220% 2012 to 2043 ¹⁷	Intercity rail	As set out above, there is a clear opportunity to improve connectivity radically along this axis, by developing the underused route via Settle and Carlisle to its potential (and former) intercity status, unlocking shorter journey times and therefore both new opportunities and modal shift

(a) *Benefits*: Beyond the specific transport benefits described in the table of the changes proposed, the nature of the economic benefits of improved long-distance transport linkages has been described in our previous answers, and the separate evidence sources referred to. In environmental terms, the critical factor is clearly the imperative to move away from carbon-intensive transport modes, including car use and, above all for longer-distance travel such as to Northern Ireland and much of Scotland, aviation. To achieve this role in the transition to post-carbon prosperity, rail transport needs to “up its game” in terms of capacity, journey times and decarbonisation – but is amply capable of doing so with reasonable and achievable well-targeted investment programmes, which do not rely on unproven technology and bring ample additional benefits in terms of cost-effective operation and of benefiting other transport markets.

(c) *Distribution of benefits and costs*: The distributional effects of investment in long-distance passenger transport have been considered in detail in the context of programmes such as HS2 (including specifically HS2 East), Northern Powerhouse Rail and the East Coast Mainline – and discussion of these critical topics can be found in the relevant documents referred to above.

(d) *Changes in demand (general comments)*: the specific figures quoted above are taken from the Network Rail Long-Distance Market Study, specifically its “Prospering in Global Stability” scenario. Clearly the premises of that scenario are now very much open to question: Britain might now be considered a less globally-oriented economy than this scenario suggests, and at least in the short term the Covid-19 pandemic has had radical effects on travel patterns, both directly and as a result of its impacts on economic prosperity. However, it is notable that on rail, until the pandemic struck, demand for intercity rail travel has continued to rise very much in line with these forecasts. Furthermore, it can be argued that, while the prospects for short-distance commuting are highly uncertain, those for long-distance rail travel in a post-Covid world appear far from poor, with strong potential for growth in leisure travel within the UK, and good prospects for modal shift particularly over longer journeys as the negative environmental impacts of aviation become increasingly understood.

(f) *Environmental impact*: As set out above, a major driver of the proposed interventions is the move to a post-carbon society which does not sacrifice mobility, quality of life or prosperity. While some rail investments will inevitably bring negative environmental impacts, such as visual impacts and disruption where new lines are to be constructed (or existing ones expanded), the overwhelming balance of benefit and cost in environmental terms is in favour of interventions of the types we have described, not only in carbon terms but as regards air quality, noise, visual amenity, water pollution and other critical measures.

(g) *Interdependencies with other policies*: While it is clear that there is significant uncertainty regarding the future political direction of the four nations of the UK and their interrelationships, including in the context of devolution (or possibly in some cases independence), this is in our view beyond the scope of this Review and we have not attempted to comment on it. We would instead emphasise the strength of the synergies between the interventions we have advocated in this response and existing policies designed to achieve, through transport interventions, improvements in prosperity and sustainability across the North. This includes the delivery of HS2 (including in particular HS2 East), Northern Powerhouse Rail, and other priorities as regards the capability and capacity of our interregional and long-distance transport networks, most critically rail. As noted above, an approach which listens to passengers’ needs and puts them first is, as identified by the Blake-Jones review, a critical component to unlocking the rail network as a true network which can achieve its full potential.

Finally, it should be emphasised that this section only considers passenger journeys. The imperative of unlocking capacity for the efficient and sustainable shipment of freight of all types is however of equal importance and must enjoy equal prominence in strategic transport planning across the UK’s four nations – again with a strong emphasis on the opportunities offered by rail.

¹⁶ Work done in preparation of West Yorkshire Rail Strategy, including initial technical and business case analysis of options for direct Leeds – Carlisle – Glasgow services. *Report to follow*.

¹⁷ NR LDMS, *Ibid*.

8. Is there a need for the development of a national strategic transport network to replace the European TEN-T network within the UK?

Please consider the specific strategic benefits of a replacement national network which would connect strategically important regions, and places in the United Kingdom in order to support economic growth and quality of life. View maps of the existing TEN-T [inland waterways and ports](#) and [railways and airports](#) network within the UK.

a) How should such a network be defined?

Please consider which criteria should be considered when identifying transport links for inclusion and how these should be assessed. Please also consider which specific transport modes should be included.

b) What would be the potential impact of such a network?

Please consider possible economic, social and environmental impacts

c) How should a network of this nature be managed or financed?

Please consider the role of the Government, Devolved Administrations and local transport authorities in your response.

d) Do you have any further comments on the potential development of a national strategic transport network?

We do not consider there to be a strong case for replacing the TEN-T network with an alternative:

- TEN-T is intended to show those networks of particular importance to trans-European movements, not those within one country. As such, it is performing a quite different function – and one which will remain at least as relevant after Brexit given the need not to make trade with our EU neighbours more difficult.
- The materiality of TEN-T is not greatly affected by Brexit in the short-to-medium term, as the international trading routes will largely remain the same ones – and TEN-T is of course not restricted to EU member states.
- In practice, most of the critical corridors for connectivity between the UK's constituent nations are in any event also TEN-T corridors. This applies to West Yorkshire too.

This is not to say that TEN-T is perfect or is all that is required:

- There are some inconsistencies in specific inclusions / exclusions / routes / places in the network
- There is arguably insufficient reflection of the differing needs of passenger and freight flows
- It has not kept pace with the imperative of movement away from carbon-intensive modes of passenger and freight transport and needs to become less “modally agnostic”

However, these are issues that are best addressed by alterations to, or by supplementing, the TEN-T networks – not by replacing them with something independent.

There is however clearly a need for a national strategic transport network to supplement resources like TEN-T, as there is for sub-national strategies such as those already being developed by Transport for the North. Such strategies should ensure that regional and other schemes are developed in the context of a coherent “bigger picture”, but in order to be valid such national strategies must have regard to the right social, environmental and economic objectives; be subject to full consultation processes; and be developed in harmony with regional, local (where relevant) and international strategies.

9. With reference to the unique geographical position of Northern Ireland please set out how best to improve cross-border transport connectivity with other nations

Please consider all possible transport options including maritime, air and rail or road via a fixed link and provide evidence as to the cost, benefits and environmental impact of these options.

As noted above, current trading links between West Yorkshire and Northern Ireland are relatively modest in scale. However, these should be enabled to continue to develop, and to do so in a sustainable manner in the post-carbon era. This is likely primarily to be about decarbonising the transport networks, including by modal shift – for overland sections of passenger and freight journeys, from road and air to rail, and for the overseas sections, from air to sea. As set out above, this entails:

- Upgrading rail links across the Pennines and on to the relevant ports in England, Scotland and Wales (and possibly via Carlisle to Stranraer / Cairnryan, subject to the issues identified above)

- Improved integration for passenger and freight traffic at these ports, having regard to the technical challenges (such as the break of rail gauge between Britain and Ireland), to produce a seamless offer that genuinely puts the passenger first
- A move to low-carbon (and in the longer run non-carbon) energy sources for ferry traffic

We would question whether a fixed link between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland, be it a tunnel or a bridge, even if found to be technically feasible, would represent a good use of scarce resources.

10. Other than geographic, are there any other specific restrictions to improving connectivity between Northern Ireland and other nations in the United Kingdom?

Please consider legal, policy and practical restrictions. Please set these out and provide evidence as to how they may limit opportunities for improved transport connectivity. Please also consider this in the context of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

Given the uncertainty regarding post-Brexit trading arrangements at the time of writing, it is difficult to comment specifically on administrative issues facing trade and travel between England and Northern Ireland. It is also notable that the future political direction of Northern Ireland is a significant source of additional uncertainty.

11. What else can be done to support greater transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom?

Please consider legal, political, structural and economic factors in your response as well as other opportunities for the UK Government to directly support improvements to transport connectivity.

Beyond the transport, economic and environmental factors discussed in previous answers, it is clear that there is significant uncertainty arising from the political situation amongst the UK's nations, perhaps most particularly Scotland and Northern Ireland. We have therefore not commented further on these, beyond noting that they are material considerations, and our response has focused on transport issues.

All public transport journeys between West Yorkshire and the other parts of the UK, as indeed to and from any location at all, must begin or end at a stop or station. This self-evident truth drives the critical priority, as relevant to this Union Connectivity Review as to any aspect of transport, that if those gateways to the transport network are not fully accessible to all sections of the community, then the chain of connectivity is broken for those who are excluded. Such exclusion cannot be considered acceptable in the modern world. We therefore consider it imperative that station accessibility works, to give access for all, be afforded a far higher priority than hitherto – it is estimated that if the current slow rate of accessibility modifications to rail stations continues, it will take well over half a century before the network is fully accessible. This must change.

12. Do you have any further comments?

This Review and call for evidence have provided a valuable opportunity for us to consider the direction in which our region's transport links with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should take in the future, notwithstanding the obvious political uncertainties.

We would suggest that a similar review of Britain's transport links with the near Continent would be highly desirable as a priority:

- Whatever form Brexit takes, it will be essential that barriers to intra-European international trade, which are independent of Brexit itself, be minimised
- The climate emergency and the nation's resultant obligations towards decarbonisation make a reappraisal of short-distance international transport arrangements an imperative
- Northern England faces, by dint of geography and as a result of historic transport investment patterns, a clear disadvantage in terms of access to continental European markets

Finally, we would add that this response largely pre-dates the publication of the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment¹⁸, and therefore does not directly refer to it. However, we consider

¹⁸ <https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/rail-needs-assessment-for-the-midlands-and-the-north/rna-final-report/>

that the points made in this response, in particular with regard to the pressing need for Government commitment to investment in HS2 East and the full delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail, as part of a coherent suite of strategic rail investment to drive sustainable growth and the shift to non-carbon transport, as set out more fully in our responses to the RNA, are directly pertinent to the RNA too. In that spirit, we look forward to further dialogue with Government and other partners to make the case for such investment in the future of the North.