



## Department for Transport

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From the Secretary of State  
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Dear Tracy,

Thank you for your letter of 19 January, about the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). I continue to regard its unprecedented commitment to £96bn of investment in rail to benefit the North and Midlands as an unarguable demonstration of this Government's commitment to levelling up.

The Government's promise has been to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), initially between Leeds and Manchester. We are delivering on that promise – and in fact between Liverpool and York. Whilst there has been an attempt by some to redefine NPR as a new line via Bradford, in reality different options for improving Leeds to Manchester journeys were always under consideration, with Huddersfield and Bradford both places that would be considered. Huddersfield and Bradford had the same status during scheme development as places that would be considered for calls on NPR services, subject to the business case. I accept we have chosen an option different to that put forward by Transport for the North (TfN). We did carefully examine those plans, but found they would cost up to £18bn more, and take around a decade longer to deliver, for little difference in journey times. I have seen no evidence that at any point in its deliberations the TfN Board considered affordability, the burden its proposals would impose on taxpayers, or the opportunity cost of such spending crowding out other transport investment, including within cities.

You mention Bradford residents and workers being quite happy to put up with some disruption during construction, but this would not be a case of some disruption later this decade, with improvements to Manchester in the early 2030s. Instead major construction activity would likely have started in the 2030s, with improvements to Manchester using the infrastructure proposed by TfN happening deep into the 2040s at best - assuming it wasn't cancelled by a future government.

Many of those residents and workers would long since have moved on or retired by then, which is why I am keen to focus on improvements that can be made quickly for Bradford, both in terms of rapid transit and the upgraded line to Leeds.

In terms of capacity, the IRP adopts one of the options for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) developed by Network Rail for TfN and DfT. It accommodates the same NPR service of 6 trains per hour from Manchester Piccadilly High Speed station to Leeds using the same type of train – and therefore provides the same NPR capacity - as the much more expensive proposals favoured by the TfN Board. All IRP scheme development is being undertaken on the basis of protecting typical services levels at places like Dewsbury, Batley and New Pudsey. Taking New Pudsey as an example, Network Rail work has demonstrated it is perfectly feasible to fit new non-stop Bradford – Leeds services through New Pudsey whilst also maintaining today's typical level of service. More generally these towns will benefit from reduced journey times and new, more environmentally friendly trains compared to today. By contrast, TfN's proposals would have seen a significant reduction in services at Huddersfield, both in terms of the number of trains calling and the number of places with a direct connection. For example, Huddersfield would have lost direct services to Hull, Newcastle and potentially Liverpool.

Our plans will see Leeds at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) network, including 40 miles of new high-speed line between Warrington and Yorkshire, and the completion of the electrification of the Transpennine Route. We will upgrade and electrify the Leeds-Bradford rail line (Calder Valley), slashing journey times from 20 mins to as low as 12 minutes. We will continue to work with West Yorkshire to help realise ambition for economic growth in Bradford by improving its rail links. In the meantime, we will progress with a package of upgrades to the East Coast Main Line to cut journey times and increase capacity, also benefitting Wakefield which had been a loser under previous proposals for the Full Eastern Leg.

Having made those points, I understand you will want to continue to make the case for further investment beyond the core pipeline we have set out in the IRP for the benefit of West Yorkshire. That is not inconsistent with the adaptive approach the Government has adopted, following the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission. Indeed, we have, as you know, committed £100 million for work to look at the best way to take HS2 trains to Leeds, including whether the current station can absorb additional services, and to support the development of a mass transit network.

I hope that we, and officials/officers, can work together on this constructively to develop further options which would benefit West Yorkshire residents and businesses.

In your letter you ask about the technical analysis underpinning the IRP. This has now been published and can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands).

As I have noted above, NPR decisions were informed by the development work undertaken by Network Rail for the Department and TfN.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**