



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Transport for Lancashire Committee

Private and Confidential: No

Wednesday, 10 January 2018

Preston Railway Station

Report Author: Dave Colbert, Tel: 01772 534501, Specialist Advisor Transport Planning, dave.colbert@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Preston Station is the busiest station in the North West outside of Manchester and Liverpool city centres and one of the busiest in the North of England. It is a major interchange between West Coast Main Line services operated by Virgin Trains and Trans-Pennine Express and a range of inter and intra-regional and local services operated by Northern, including the increasingly important east-west corridor linking Lancashire with North and West Yorkshire. Despite an estimated 5 million passenger trips annually and a further 1.49 million interchanges, the station has received limited/piecemeal investment over several decades, resulting in a poor passenger experience and preventing the station from contributing towards the wider growth and development of the city centre. Furthermore, there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed in order for Preston Station to become 'HS2 ready' by 2026.

Creation of a high quality, contemporary transport hub with enhanced passenger and commercial facilities will enable the station to serve people and businesses better. This will be particularly important once HS2 becomes operational in 2026, reinforcing Preston's role as the North West's major rail hub north of Manchester and access point for HS2 services for a large catchment area with a population of over 1.4m people extending across much of Lancashire and South Cumbria.

The LEP and partners will need to develop and maintain close working relationships with a range of organisations to ensure transformation of Preston Station progresses. Positioning station transformation at the core of Lancashire's local response to the Government's recently published Industrial Strategy will be essential in influencing future national rail investment priorities. Further work is therefore necessary to fully understand and quantify the wider economic growth and productivity benefits that the station's transformation could deliver. Specialist consultants will need to be engaged to undertake this work, which will also need to include forecasts of future passenger demand, particularly for when HS2 services begin operating in 2026.

Recommendations



The Transport for Lancashire Committee is asked:

- (i) To recommend that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board support the commissioning of a study to examine and quantify the wider economic growth and productivity benefits that the transformation of Preston Station could deliver, this work to also include forecasts of future passenger demand particularly for when HS2 services begin operating in 2026, and
- (ii) To request the LEP Board agree to fund the study from its strategic case-making budget.

Background and Advice

Central Lancashire is a transport hub of national significance, providing most of Lancashire's connections to the West Coast Main Line, the M6 and, in the future, to HS2. Preston station lies approximately mid-way between Glasgow and London on the West Coast Main Line and with an estimated 5 million passenger trips annually and a further 1.49 million interchanges, is the busiest station in the North West outside of Manchester and Liverpool city centres and one of the busiest in the North of England¹. Virgin West Coast, Trans-Pennine Express and Northern currently provide daytime passenger services to a wide range of destinations, with the overnight 'Caledonian Sleeper' service between London and Scotland also making a call.

Over the last ten years, the number of passengers using Preston Station have increased by 44%. In addition to West Coast Main Line services to London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh, there are also regular direct trains to Manchester city centre, Manchester Airport and Liverpool, and to Leeds in the increasingly important east-west corridor linking Lancashire with North and West Yorkshire. The station provides connections into these services from Blackpool, Blackburn and East Lancashire, Lancaster and the Lake District. It is therefore a critical asset for the city and for Lancashire as a whole, serving as a gateway for an extensive catchment of communities further afield, particularly for connectivity with the West Coast Main Line.

The station's development is of fundamental importance as a driver of economic growth aspirations across Lancashire. As outlined in the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal, ambitious plans for new employment and commercial development are being delivered across Central Lancashire with the potential to create around 20,000 net new private sector jobs, alongside the delivery of over 17,000 new homes. Enhanced rail connectivity could act as a major stimulus for further employment growth in Lancashire, potentially contributing to the LEP's objective of an additional 50,000 new jobs by 2025 and in turn supporting the broader growth objectives of the Northern Powerhouse.

¹ The comparable figures for Crewe are 3 million and 1.48 million respectively



Creation of a high quality, contemporary transport hub at Preston Station with enhanced passenger and commercial facilities will enable the station to serve people and businesses better. This will be particularly important once HS2 becomes operational in 2026, reinforcing Preston's role as the North West's major rail hub north of Manchester. Establishing an HS2 Growth Strategy as recommended by the HS2 Growth Taskforce² for Preston Station will be an important element to achieving this. In addition, Network Rail has also requested the City and County Councils prepare a long-term vision for the station to inform its strategic review of West Coast Main Line capacity north of Crewe.

Whilst Preston Station has retained its original Victorian fabric, it has received limited/piecemeal investment over several decades, resulting in a poor passenger experience and preventing the station from contributing towards the wider commercial development of the city centre. The station building lacks presence, resulting in poor first impressions of the city for visitors and poor customer satisfaction, and has poor DDA compliance. A number of key issues need addressing, both from a rail operating perspective, particularly once HS2 services begin operating in 2026, and from a passenger perspective in terms of access, circulation and safety. These issues include:

- poor use of platforms;
- poor accessibility and circulation;
- track and pedestrian capacity;
- dated and unsuitable facilities;
- poor retail and commercial offer in the station;
- lack of profile within the city;
- poor vehicular circulation and parking locations;
- poor inter-relationships with adjacent / nearby land,
- underused land resources; and
- pedestrian safety.

The deteriorating environment and increasing maintenance costs of structures including platforms, overbridges and subways are all issues that modernisation of the station could eliminate.

Pedestrian circulation around the station is currently very constrained and provided for largely by a narrow footbridge that does not support efficient cross-platform interchange. The only other means of moving between platforms is via a subway towards the southern end of the station, which again is narrow and does not offer a suitable environment for passengers. At the northern end of the station, the main entrance is small and leads directly to a cramped, short-stay car park and taxi rank. The most active entrance, from Butler Street on the eastern side of the station, is capable of accommodating current footfall and results in pedestrians funnelling directly onto the narrow footbridge due to insufficient space. A second entrance from Butler Street featuring ticket vending machines and customer information screens opened in June 2017.

² High Speed 2: Get Ready, A report to the Government by the HS2 Growth Taskforce, March 2014



Preston Station currently has six operational through platforms and two bay platforms at its southern end. Whilst platforms 3 and 4 are relatively spacious, platforms 1 and 2 are narrow and very busy throughout the day. These platforms generally accommodate Blackpool, Liverpool and East Lancashire services, the former typically carrying passengers with large amounts of luggage and a high proportion of passengers that require assistance. Unlike other platforms, there is no ramp access to these platforms and the lift is at the southern end of the station, furthest away from any entrance. These issues need considering in the context of the near 1.5 million interchanges per annum that take place, many of which will be between long distance services on the West Coast Main Line and more local services to Blackpool and East Lancashire.

Preston benefitted significantly from the West Coast Main Line Route Modernisation programme completed in December 2008, with journey times to and from London reduced to just over two hours utilising 'Pendolino' tilting trains. More recently, the completion of electrification works between Liverpool and Manchester / Wigan as part of Network Rail's £1bn+ Great North Rail Project (GNRP) has enabled the introduction of brand new electric trains on Trans-Pennine Express services between Scotland, Preston, Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport via Wigan North Western. In addition, refurbished four carriage electric trains now operate the hourly service between Preston and Liverpool Lime Street / Liverpool South Parkway, providing a significant increase in seating capacity on this route.

Network Rail continues to progress the upgrade and electrification of the direct route between Manchester and Preston via Chorley and the Preston to Blackpool North line, both due for completion in 2018. This corridor, which links Preston with Manchester city centre and Manchester Airport, is of strategic importance not only to much of Lancashire, but also to Cumbria and Scotland. The GNRP will deliver a journey time of just over 30 minutes between Preston and central Manchester by Trans-Pennine Express services, with the line speed raised up to 100mph in places. Stations in central Manchester provide connections for onward travel to and from a range of other key destinations across the North, including Leeds³ and Sheffield. Recent economic and employment growth in Lancashire has been strongest in this corridor, with added potential to grow the business travel market in Lancashire whilst at the same time helping to reduce congestion on the parallel M61.

The new Trans-Pennine Express franchise announced in December 2015 includes a commitment to introduce brand new 125mph five carriage electric trains on services in this corridor with more seats; service frequency will also increase, including at weekends. Similarly, Northern will introduce brand new electric trains on services between Blackpool North and Manchester Airport as part of its wider 'Northern Connect' network. In addition, brand new or refurbished diesel trains will operate 'Northern Connect' services between Barrow-in-Furness and Manchester Airport (via Wigan) and Blackpool North and York via Preston, East Lancashire and Leeds. There will be on average five trains per hour between Preston and Manchester (four serving Piccadilly of which three continue to Manchester Airport and one serving

³ It is currently almost as quick to travel from Preston to Leeds by changing trains in Manchester as it is to use the direct service via Burnley and Bradford.



Victoria). For passengers, the contrast between the station and on-board experience will quickly become even starker.

Following completion of HS2 Phase 1 between London and the West Midlands in 2026, Preston will be the only intermediate stop on the London to Glasgow and Edinburgh services. Phase 2a will open the following year, extending HS2 to Crewe and reducing journey times between Preston and London to 1 hour 28 minutes, a reduction of over 45 minutes on the current journey time. By 2033, when HS2 Phase 2b is operational, HS2 services will be able to travel as far Golborne just to the south of Wigan on new infrastructure, reducing journey times by a further 10 minutes.

There are a number of key issues that need to be addressed in order for Preston Station to become 'HS2 ready' by 2026. None of the through platforms will be capable of accommodating 400m long HS2 trains from 2033 when Glasgow and Edinburgh services combine. Furthermore, level access between trains and platforms is likely to be a requirement from 2026. In general, the track layout within the station and the junctions to the south are not able to accommodate growth associated with long-term conditional outputs. Both track and signalling infrastructure are also in need of renewal.

In future, Preston station will serve as the access point for HS2 services for a large catchment area with a population of over 1.4m people extending across much of Lancashire and South Cumbria and including Barrow, Blackburn, Blackpool, Burnley, Kendal, Lancaster and Windermere. Journey times between London and 79 stations locally with direct services to/from Preston will reduce by up to 80 minutes following completion of the full HS2 network in 2033. It is therefore essential that Preston Station be transformed into a modern, 21st century facility through which passengers from these stations can interchange with HS2 services in comfortable surroundings.

Stations are increasingly becoming economic destinations of choice in their own right, acting as a catalyst for economic growth and regeneration. A fully HS2-integrated station at Preston will complement ambitious plans drawn up by the County Council, Preston City Council and partners for a comprehensive commercial, retail and residential development programme for the city centre as well as supporting wider City Deal priorities such as Cuerden and strategic employment locations such as the Samlesbury and Warton Enterprise Zones. Transformation of the station will enhance its presence in the city and relationship to existing and proposed development, including UCLan's £200m city centre campus redevelopment and the leisure-led transformation of City Centre North. This includes the potential to create a new business district close to the station to provide Preston with the high quality, premium business investment location currently missing from the city centre and necessary to attract professional, financial and business services together with ICT, digital and creative industries.

The LEP and partners will need to develop and maintain close working relationships with a range of organisations including the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Network Rail, HS2 and the wider rail industry to ensure transformation of Preston Station progresses. Positioning station transformation at the core of Lancashire's local response to the Government's recently published Industrial



Strategy will be essential in influencing future national rail investment priorities given the raised profiles of rail centres of less strategic importance elsewhere in the North.

Further work is therefore necessary to examine and quantify the wider economic growth and productivity benefits that the station's transformation could deliver. Specialist consultants will need to be engaged to undertake this work, which will also need to include forecasts of future passenger demand, particularly for when HS2 services begin operating in 2026. This in turn can inform further investigations of station capacity in terms of pedestrian circulation and any potential impact on future access requirements. The Preston City Transport Plan commissioned by the County Council in April 2017 and awarded to Mott MacDonald is considering station access within the context of a comprehensive accessibility, movement and connectivity strategy for the city centre.