



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Limited

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Preston Railway Station

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Executive Summary

This report highlights a number of issues with regard to Preston Railway Station in light of ongoing improvements to the rail network and services in Lancashire, the forthcoming arrival of HS2 from 2026 and the Station's potential to play an enhanced role as a growth driver for Lancashire and the Northern Powerhouse.

The LEP Board is asked to approve funding to enable an independent analysis to be commissioned which will examine and quantify the wider economic growth and productivity benefits that the Station's transformation could deliver, including connectivity, accessibility and land use. The work will also need to include forecasts of future passenger demand, particularly for when HS2 services begin operating.

Recommendation

The LEP Board is asked to

- 1) Agree to the commissioning of consultants to undertake a study to examine and quantify the wider economic growth and productivity benefits that Preston Rail Station's transformation could deliver, including forecasts of future passenger demand; and
- 2) Approve an allocation of up to £50,000 for the study from the LEP's 2017/18 Operational 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

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



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 10 years, the numbers of passengers using Preston Railway 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 transformational growth objectives of the Northern Powerhouse.

Creation of a high quality, contemporary transport hub at Preston 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.

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

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



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 increased to near 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 to be launched in December 2019. 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 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.

In future, Preston Station will act as an interchange for HS2 services for a much larger regional catchment area with a population of over 1.6 million 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

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.



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 major catalysts for place-based growth strategies. 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 Aerospace and Warton Aviation 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 progress. Positioning the Station's transformation as a core element 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 significantly less strategic importance elsewhere in the North.

Transport for Lancashire, at its meeting on 10 January, considered these issues and recommended the LEP Board supports the case-making request set out in this report. More specifically, Transport for Lancashire recommended the LEP Board support the commissioning of specialist consultants to undertake a study to examine and quantify the wider growth and productivity benefits that the Station's transformation could deliver, including connectivity, accessibility and land use, with the work to include forecasts of future passenger demand, particularly for when HS2 services begin operating in 2026.

It is anticipated that the study could cost circa £50,000. The work in turn can inform further investigations of the Station's 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. If approved by the Board, the analysis of Preston Railway Station will be presented to a future meeting of Transport for Lancashire.