

**Report to the Leader of the County Council**  
**Report submitted by: Head of Service, Public and Integrated Transport**  
**Date: 10 March 2016**

**Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
All

**Burnley-Colne-Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement**  
(Appendix 'A' refers)

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**Executive Summary**

The Lancashire Strategic Transport Prospectus, launched in February 2016, acknowledges that there is growing interest in the east-west transport corridor linking Central Lancashire with North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region. The railway line from Gannow Junction east of Rose Grove to Colne previously continued to Skipton as a through route, but passenger services ceased in January 1970 and the track was removed. If reinstated, services could continue through to Skipton and possibly to Leeds along the electrified Airedale Line, thereby significantly reducing journey times between Nelson and Colne and Leeds.

Following a 'summit' meeting held in Skipton on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015, at the behest of the Department for Transport and the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP) and at the Department for Transport's request, the County Council along with colleagues from North Yorkshire County Council and the West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester combined authorities, established a working group, chaired by Lancashire County Council and with representation from SELRAP and other interested parties, to consider what purposes a rail link between Burnley, Colne and Skipton could potentially serve in order to place such a scheme in the correct context in transport planning terms. The report of the working group is now complete.

The Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement sets out a series of conditional outputs that underline the wide variety of transport links to which reopening the Colne to Skipton line could potentially be relevant. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a strong case, either strategically or economically, for providing such a link. The Statement concludes that further consideration of a reopened rail link between Colne and Skipton should take place in the context of strategic as opposed to local transport planning in order to ensure that all of the conditional outputs identified are taken into account.

## **Recommendations**

The Leader of the County Council is asked:

- (i) to note the contents of this report; and
- (ii) to approve the Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement attached at Appendix 'A', for use by the County Council in future engagement with the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Network Rail, the wider rail industry and other interested parties, and that the Statement enter the public domain.

## **Background and Advice**

The Lancashire Strategic Transport Prospectus, launched in February 2016, acknowledges that there is growing interest in the east-west transport corridor linking Central Lancashire with North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region. This corridor comprises the M65/A56/A6068 and A59 roads and parallel rail routes including the Calder Valley line linking Preston, Blackburn and Burnley with Bradford and Leeds via Hebden Bridge. Several long-standing aspirations for improved connectivity by both road and rail currently exist and a number of schemes have been considered in the past. The corridor is not covered specifically by any of the Department for Transport led studies announced in the Road Investment Strategy in December 2014 as none of the Trans-Pennine routes within it are part of the Strategic Road Network.

A key challenge for the East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan is establishing the optimum balance between outward connectivity and internal accessibility to jobs, education and training. East Lancashire's rail network is relatively constrained in terms of connectivity, capacity, performance, journey quality, journey times and passenger facilities at many of the smaller stations. The network will continue to need significant investment if it is to support the local economy into the future; without such investment, the perception of East Lancashire as being poorly connected is likely to grow.

The East Lancashire Rail Connectivity Study examined this issue in depth, adopting a Conditional Outputs approach in accordance with standard rail industry practice and recognising that to deliver transformational change to East Lancashire's rail network will require the support of Network Rail, Rail North and the relevant Train Operating Companies. It concluded that in order to achieve the Conditional Outputs that would enhance connectivity between East Lancashire and Leeds, in particular, increased service frequency and improved journey times, the potential impact on the capacity of the Calder Valley line between Todmorden and Leeds would need to be assessed. Furthermore, should future economic circumstances dictate that connectivity between East Lancashire and Leeds be enhanced to the point where capacity on the Calder Valley line becomes a constraining factor, consideration of alternative options between Burnley and Leeds such as reinstatement of the line between Colne and Skipton and associated upgrade of the existing Colne branch may become necessary.

The East Lancashire Rail Connectivity Study Conditional Outputs Statement was approved by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 as the County Council's adopted position in future discussions and negotiations with the Department for Transport, Rail North, the wider rail industry and adjacent transport authorities, in particular, with regard to the next rail industry investment period covering 2019 to 2024 ('Control Period 6').

The Calder Valley line is a twin track railway supporting a regular interval hourly cross-Pennine limited stop service between Blackpool North and York. It is severely constrained in places by topography, the resulting low line speeds having a significant impact on journey times, typically over 70 minutes for the journey between Burnley Manchester Road and Leeds via Bradford. Capacity is also constrained by the mix of traffic and stopping patterns, although freight traffic on the route east of Blackburn is very limited.

The branch from Gannow Junction east of Rose Grove to Burnley Central, Nelson and Colne is single track and previously continued to Skipton as a through route, but passenger services ceased in January 1970 and the track was removed. The track bed remains more or less intact, and if reinstated could enable services on the branch to continue through to Skipton and possibly to Leeds along the electrified Airedale Line, thereby significantly reducing journey times between Nelson and Colne and Leeds. A group of local stakeholders, the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP) has been campaigning for the route between Colne and Skipton to be reopened for a number of years.

Following a 'summit' meeting held in Skipton on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at the behest of the Department for Transport and SELRAP and at the Department for Transport's request, the County Council along with colleagues from North Yorkshire County Council and the West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester combined authorities agreed to establish a working group, chaired by Lancashire County Council and with representation from SELRAP and other interested parties, to consider what purposes a rail link between Burnley, Colne and Skipton could potentially serve in order to place such a scheme in the correct context in transport planning terms. The working group adopted a Conditional Outputs approach to maintain consistency with standard rail industry practice. The report of the working group is now complete.

The Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement attached at Appendix 'A', sets out a series of conditional outputs that could be relevant to the potential reopening of the Colne to Skipton railway line. These conditional outputs are a set of outcomes, in terms of linkages for both passenger and freight transport, to which the reopened line could be relevant, and against which a potential scheme should be assessed together with alternative options to achieve the same outcomes. They have been developed without considering affordability, deliverability or specific infrastructure, nor do they imply a business case for any measures to fulfil them. It will be for subsequent stages of work to consider the design, operational feasibility and cost implications of fulfilling the conditional outputs, as well as undertaking demand and revenue forecasting work. There will also be a need to investigate the potential scale of wider economic, social and environmental benefits that fulfilling some or all of the conditional outputs might unlock.

The timing of this work is partly driven by the forthcoming Network Rail North of England Route Study, on which work is expected to commence later this year. It is intended that the findings of this Conditional Outputs Statement will inform the Route Study process, which could then take forward any recommendations implied by this work, as appropriate. The Statement will also be available to inform Transport for the North's developing strategies for future connectivity across the North.

Whilst the Conditional Outputs Statement is only intended to be the starting point for the development of a strategic case for improved rail connectivity in the Preston - Burnley - Colne - Skipton - Leeds corridor, the conditional outputs identified underline the wide variety of transport links to which reopening the Colne to Skipton line could potentially be relevant. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a strong case, either strategically or economically, for providing a specific rail link between Colne and Skipton, rather that when considering the case for doing so, options relevant to all of the conditional outputs should be considered.

The Statement concludes that further consideration of a reopened rail link between Colne and Skipton should take place in the context of strategic as opposed to local transport planning in order to ensure that all of the conditional outputs identified are taken into account. This in turn means that it will be necessary to investigate all potential options that might fulfil these conditional outputs as opposed to considering the case for a reopened railway between Colne and Skipton in isolation.

The authorities who have created the Statement are aware of the County Council's intention to use it in future engagement with the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Network Rail, the wider rail industry other interested parties, and that the Statement will enter the public domain.

## **Consultations**

The East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan underwent public consultation during October and November 2013 and was subsequently approved by the County Council's Cabinet in February 2014. No other specific consultations have taken place.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

The Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement enhances the evidence base with regard to the potential for improving east-west Trans-Pennine connectivity between Lancashire and North and West Yorkshire. As such, it will help to ensure that the County Council's future engagement with a range of agencies, including Transport for the North, is underpinned by accepted rail industry practice.

## **Financial**

There are no financial implications.

## Legal

The Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement has been prepared jointly by officers from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils and the West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester combined authorities. What each authority does with the Statement is a matter for them. The County Council has informed them of its intention and no concerns have been raised. The legal implications of how the Statement goes forward to be used by the County Council as proposed are minimal.

### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan	February 2014	Marcus Hudson 01772 530696
East Lancashire Rail Connectivity Study Stage 3: Conditional Output Statement	April 2015	Dave Colbert 01772 534501
Lancashire Strategic Transport Prospectus	February 2016	Dave Colbert 01772 534501

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A