

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: [Integrated rail plan](#), HC 974

Wednesday 2 February 2022

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Members present: Huw Merriman (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Simon Jupp; Robert Langan; Chris Loder; Karl McCartney; Grahame Morris; Greg Smith.

Questions 1–57

Witnesses

[I](#): Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Examination of witness

Witness: Andy Burnham.

Q1 Chair: This is the Transport Select Committee's first evidence session in our new inquiry on the integrated rail plan, the Government's £96 billion investment, which the Prime Minister tells us is the "biggest ever government investment in our rail network, in redressing decades of underspending in the Midlands and the North, and in levelling up our country."

We will have a number of sessions. The second session will focus on the midlands, with the Mayor of the West Midlands. The first session is on the north. We will be hearing from Transport for the North in our second panel this morning. In our first panel, we have the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham. Andy, I have just introduced you, but if you would like to introduce yourself for the record, that would be great.

Andy Burnham: Good morning, Chair, and members of the Committee. I am Andy Burnham, now in my second term as the first elected Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Q2 Chair: Mayor Burnham, a warm welcome back to you. We are looking forward to taking evidence from you over the next hour on a wide range of issues. I will kick off with the integrated rail plan in general terms and what it means for Manchester. Is it a good deal for the people and businesses in Manchester?

Andy Burnham: First, Chair, let me say how much I welcome this inquiry by the Select Committee. It is very important that we take a long, detailed look at what is being proposed. These are once in 200-year decisions for the country, particularly for the north of England. If we get second best, the north of England will have second best for 200 years or more. That is why the importance of this cannot be overstated.

I need to recognise that Greater Manchester does proportionately better out of the integrated rail plan than other parts of the country, particularly the eastern half of the country with the loss of the eastern leg of HS2 and the concerns from colleagues in West Yorkshire around connectivity from Leeds to Sheffield and Bradford. It is fair to say that we do better, and I need to recognise that. I know that there are members of the Committee from other parts of the country who would say, "Well, hang on, Manchester is doing okay," but better is not what we should settle for in terms of the full ambition and unlocking the full potential of the north. We do not get connectivity to Bradford, which is a critical neighbour city for us, nor the full benefits of the capacity and connectivity to Leeds that we have been promised.

We are still being asked to contribute to the airport station at Manchester airport. We are the only part of the country being asked to contribute to the cost of this plan. While there are clearly significant benefits for us, I



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do not believe that this plan is as good as it can be. I do not believe that it will unlock the full economic transformation for the north of England.

Q3 Chair: Thank you for the opener. Chris Loder is going to focus on the wider parts of the north, but for my sections I want particularly to focus on Manchester. Which sections of the Manchester economy will benefit particularly from the IRP?

Andy Burnham: It is fair to say that there will be a wide benefit felt. Obviously, if we can resolve funding issues at Manchester airport that will be a significant asset for our city region, and indeed the north and the country as a whole. Manchester airport is the strategic airport for the north of England, with long-haul connections. The IRP would deliver much better north-south connectivity and better east-west connectivity and, as such, would bring big economic benefits.

Wigan would benefit. Currently, the Golborne link is still in the IRP. That creates the potential for a transport hub in Wigan, which, again, would bring significant benefits to the western fringe of Greater Manchester. There is some doubt about that link, though, Chair, because the "Union connectivity Review" by Sir Peter Hendy suggested that that link may be taken further up the west coast main line more towards Preston. We believe that the economic benefit would be lost to the main corridor of population in the north-west between Manchester and Liverpool, where Wigan sits, if the line goes further north. We suggest to the Committee that more benefit would be kept in the heart of the north-west of England if the Wigan option was maintained.

To get to the heart of your question, obviously if you were to bring HS2 to Manchester Piccadilly and develop enhanced east-west connectivity, you are creating the potential for an economic powerhouse at the heart of the north of England. It is our belief that the current proposal would bring benefit. However, more economic benefit could be achieved by a different approach to the redesign of Piccadilly station. In particular, an underground option at Piccadilly would release more land in city centre Manchester for economic development. We believe thousands more jobs could be brought to that area if the station was designed as an underground station with full Northern Powerhouse Rail connectivity.

Yes, the IRP brings benefit, but it is not maximising the potential benefit to Manchester and the wider north.

Q4 Chair: In the few minutes I have remaining, you said that you recognise that Manchester does okay from the plan. I was looking through page 31 of the plan where it gives costs. There is a total of £96.4 billion for the plan. I think only two of those items do not impact Manchester directly. Therefore, out of the £96 billion Manchester seems to have connectivity investment of £82 billion. Isn't "okay" a little ungenerous for Manchester on that basis?



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Andy Burnham: I am not seeking to be overly critical. Obviously, I have praised the plan as far as it goes. It will bring significant benefit to Greater Manchester, but I am not sure, Chair, that my figures about the £96 billion match up to yours.

Q5 **Chair:** Let me explain where I am coming from. I think you have the plan in front of you. Look at page 31. In fact, I believe I might be being more generous. If you look at the £1.5 billion for rail schemes in the north and midlands, I think some of those are Manchester, but I have struck the whole lot off at £1.5 billion. I have also taken off the HS2 east core, which is £12.8 billion. I would say that all the other matters go to Manchester in some shape or form.

Andy Burnham: I am not sure we have the same analysis. Maybe the Committee needs to unpack this as part of its inquiry. Let me give you the analysis from Transport for Greater Manchester, which are the figures that I have been given for this Committee today.

Of the £96 billion, our assessment is that for projects which are exclusively in the north of England £39.6 billion is being spent. That is HS2 western leg plus TransPennine upgrade and the core Northern Powerhouse Rail elements—the new line as it is proposed. That is 41% of the £96 billion.

Q6 **Chair:** To cut to the quick, you would dispute that the completion of HS2 phases 1 and 2a would actually impact Manchester in the way that I would argue it would.

Andy Burnham: Everyone everywhere benefits from the connectivity, don't they? If you build a railway line, everywhere on that railway line benefits, but obviously sometimes more money is spent in different parts of the country. We question why a lot of money has been spent taking HS2 underground through the Chilterns for, you might say, little economic benefit and why more money is not being spent in city centre Manchester to take HS2 underground to maximise economic benefit.

As the Committee will know, Manchester struggles with having too much rail congestion on the surface. The Victorian infrastructure that runs through Manchester today is heavily congested, and the effect of that is to cause delays across the north. It was principally the reason behind the timetable chaos of May 2018. What we are saying is, are we at risk of repeating the mistakes of the past by bringing HS2 in on the surface as well, and then taking out the new core NPR lines also on the surface?

The figures I have tell us that the sums being spent south of Birmingham as part of HS2 phase 1 account for £37.5 billion, so roughly 40% of the total. Those are the figures I have. Obviously, the Committee will want to get to the bottom of them. That is currently the proposal. What I am putting to you is that money has been spent on the southern section of the line for little economic benefit, whereas we are not spending to unlock the full benefit on the northern part of the integrated rail plan.



Chair: I am almost to time. I had some more questions, but I have run out of my time. Members, take note. Over to Chris to continue.

Q7 Chris Loder: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Andy. It is good to see you today. I want to ask you a little bit about the wider benefits of the IRP, not just for Manchester but a little further afield. To start with, I am interested in your view as to what contribution you think the IRP will make to levelling up the north and the wider value of the north, please.

Andy Burnham: That is an extremely important question. It goes right to the heart of this inquiry by the Transport Select Committee. It cannot be answered if you were to read the Government's technical annexe for the IRP prepared by the Department for Transport. This is the problem, Chris, if you really want to get to the heart of the matter.

Let me quote to you from page 9 of that technical annexe. It says that the levelling-up impact should be assessed through a description "of potential impact of transport investment on the wider economy." It defines how levelling-up impact should be assessed. On page 10 it says, "Given the early stage of development of the options under consideration...it has not been possible to fully assess their impacts on the wider economy."

Let me put that into plain English. There has been no levelling-up impact assessment of the IRP plan on the north of England. What I would put to the Committee is that this is a very traditional railway assessment of a scheme that has led to what we have. They have taken a narrower value for money approach which looks at transport benefits in terms of growth in rail, journey times, frequencies and the impact on traffic congestion, but they have not, by their own admission on page 10 of the technical annexe, carried out a levelling-up impact assessment. This is the point I was just making to the Chair of the Committee. We should be have a place-based vision with regard to rail investment, unlocking the full economic benefit.

Q8 Chris Loder: We need to crack on. Thank you for your answer; I appreciate that. Could you tell me, for Manchester and the surrounding network, what has happened to passenger numbers since we have been in a pandemic? Where are we,—compared with 1 March 2020, roughly? Are you able to share that insight with us?

Andy Burnham: Actually, the north of England has recovered better than other parts of the country. There has been very strong growth back on the railways. Martin Tugwell from Transport for the North presented the figures recently to one of our meetings. I would probably suggest that he would have the more up-to-date information, but rail patronage has bounced back more strongly in the north than in other parts of the country.

Q9 Chris Loder: Are you able to say to what percentage it has bounced back at this stage, or should we ask Martin that separately?



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Andy Burnham: The percentage figures were presented. I think it is between 90% and 100%, certainly in Manchester, over the summer of 2021.

Q10 **Chris Loder:** Thank you. I think we ought to get the information so that we are crystal clear. In other parts of the country, we are lucky if we have seen it bounce back to maybe 40% or even 50%. The reason I ask the question is this. We have £96.1 billion in the paper from the Government. I understand from your comments earlier that you think it is not quite that amount for Manchester, but we are talking about billions rather than millions. That is an enormous amount.

I represent a constituency in the south-west that has the worst rail frequency in the country. Do you think it is a sound investment for taxpayers across the country, including in the south-west, to support the infrastructure in this report for Manchester, given what we have seen happen to passenger numbers in recent times?

Andy Burnham: As I say, passenger numbers have recovered, but Martin will be able to give you those figures. The purpose of this investment is to change the economic circumstances of the north of England and to increase productivity, which, as you know, lags quite seriously behind other parts of the country.

Let's get to the heart of this. Back in June 2014, the north was promised a brand-new railway line by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the original Northern Powerhouse speech. The promise was a third high-speed railway for the north. We did not necessarily ask for it. We were promised that, and we welcomed it. Five years later, in front of Stevenson's Rocket in city centre Manchester, the current Prime Minister made a similar promise. He said he wanted to be the PM who did for the north what Crossrail had done for London—that is, provided a new line.

Q11 **Chris Loder:** My question specifically was, do you think it is a sound investment for taxpayers across the country to support your area to the tune of billions? It is £96.1 billion in the paper, but I understand you think it is less for Manchester. Do you think it is a sound investment for the taxpayers of the United Kingdom to support your area to that extent?

Andy Burnham: My conclusion is that this investment is not as effective as it could be. It is not generating the maximum return that it could. For instance, by not including Bradford in the plan, we are losing the opportunity to lift an entire northern city and to raise its economy.

Bear in mind that I do not just look at Manchester. The ease with which people get from Manchester to Bradford and Bradford to Manchester affects both of us. As I said to the Chair before, you have to look at a railway line in its entirety. You cannot just single out one place.

Q12 **Chris Loder:** If you think more investment is needed, exactly how much money do you think is required for adequate investment in the rail system for the midlands and the north?



Andy Burnham: Later this morning, you are going to speak to a former Transport Secretary who, in my view, brought forward a coherent plan for high-speed rail coming from south to north up both sides of the country—the western side of the country and the eastern—connected by a brand-new high-speed line across the top of that. In my judgment, that was a coherent plan. Northern Powerhouse Rail was costed as part of that at around £70 billion.

- Q13 **Chris Loder:** On top of the amount we have seen; is that right? If it is, the Government have offered £96.1 billion. I appreciate that you have a slightly different view for Manchester, but it is a phenomenal amount. There are other parts of the country that are lucky to get thousands.

Andy Burnham: You can quote the figure of £96 billion all day, but I was not the one who stood on a manifesto promising a new line to the north of England at the last election. Promises made have to be honoured, particularly if you consider this investment. The question is, is it maximising the economic return to the north of England?

I said to you at the start—I do not think you recognised the seriousness of what I said—that the Government's own technical annexe has not carried out a levelling-up impact assessment of this plan, so how could you, as a member of the Committee, say that it is value for money when you have not, as a Government, carried out the full assessment?

- Q14 **Chris Loder:** Andy, to be honest with you, no one is saying that. We are asking the question so that we can improve our understanding and so that we can come to that conclusion.

Andy Burnham: You are asserting to me that we should just be grateful for what we are given—

- Q15 **Chris Loder:** No; that is not what I am saying.

Andy Burnham: Let me answer the question. I am here to answer your questions.

Chris Loder: That is not what I said. I have not made any assertions. I have just asked you some straightforward questions so we can get those facts and digest the points that you made. I will ask the same questions of the others shortly, and I am sure my colleagues will as well.

Chair, I am conscious of the time so I will hand back to you. We will come back to Andy in just a minute.

Chair: Excellent, thanks Chris. We are all doing well on time. The next section is on capacity and journey times with Ruth Cadbury.

Ruth Cadbury: It is good to see you again, Andy.

Andy Burnham: Good morning, Ruth.

- Q16 **Ruth Cadbury:** In the context of new high-speed rail lines, what is more important and beneficial economically: increasing capacity or reducing



journey times?

Andy Burnham: For us, Ruth, I would say it is capacity. That is what is currently holding back performance on the railway system of the north of England. We are talking of a largely Victorian system. In city centre Manchester we have a stretch of railway line that is one of the few designated as congested infrastructure—the Castlefield corridor. It is at the heart of the north of England. As I was saying before, delays in that area and that stretch of line knock on to delays right across the north because trains just cannot get through city centre Manchester in time.

Consequently, having been promised a much expanded timetable, currently the railway industry is consulting on going back to a more reduced timetable for December 2022. Capacity is a critical concern for us. The IRP in its current configuration, built on the surface at Manchester Piccadilly, would effectively be at full capacity from day one. There is very limited room for growth in the design that has been put forward. We think it is inferior when it comes to capacity. That is also confirmed by the Government's own technical annexe prepared for the integrated rail plan. It says that the full version that I referred to earlier, with full Northern Powerhouse Rail as a brand-new line, would have offered enhanced capacity and, I might say, connectivity as well. Clearly, it would have created a link to Bradford that is currently not included in the improvements.

In my view, it is very much about capacity. Journey times are important, Ruth, but if you are looking at the railways in the north of England and you want to solve them for the next two centuries, you would look at capacity as the key thing that you needed to fix.

Ruth Cadbury: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Ruth, you have finished early, so I am going to bring Robert Largan in, because he wanted to ask something in this section.

Robert Largan: Thank you, and good morning, Andy.

Andy Burnham: Good morning, Robert.

Q17 **Robert Largan:** To pick up on something that was touched on in that answer about the current review of the timetables, Ruth asked a very good question about capacity or journey time. When it comes to the new timetable, which is something I am looking at very carefully as well for the way it impacts on my own constituency, there is a question of frequency or reliability. Some have made the argument that perhaps we should reduce frequency slightly to secure a much more reliable service. I would like to get your thoughts on the balance between reliability and frequency.

Andy Burnham: Thank you, Robert. It is a difficult one. What we had in 2018 was an attempt to increase frequency of services across the north. It is the right thing to do, but it is no good if it cannot be delivered in a reliable way. I think reliability comes first. It is why reluctantly—I stress



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reluctantly—we have had to accept that to fix the problems of 2018 we have to go back to a reduced timetable in December this year.

My point this morning is, why is the north always forced to trade off? “You can have a north-south line or an east-west line but not both,” or, “You can have reliable services but not frequent services.” London and the south-east has never had to choose between those things. It has always had north-south, east-west and reliable and frequent. The argument I am making is that levelling-up, if it is to mean something when it comes to transport, should mean that the north of England does not have to trade off those things. It should get both.

We are talking about the IRP, but we still do not have answers to capacity on the classic railway system in city centre Manchester. For instance, what we have called for is extra platform capacity at Manchester Piccadilly and expanded capacity in the Castlefield corridor, as I said to Ruth Cadbury a moment ago. I do not think we should be asked to choose. It is often areas like your constituency that suffer from the reduction in service frequency and coverage.

Robert Largan: I could not agree more. I will be asking you later about Piccadilly station.

Chair: Northern Powerhouse Rail was established in 2015 to radically improve connectivity between the cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull and Newcastle. We want to talk to you about that plan. I will hand over to Simon Jupp to do so.

Simon Jupp: Thanks, Chair. Good morning to you, Andy.

Andy Burnham: Good morning, Simon.

Q18 **Simon Jupp:** Could you outline to me why, in your mind, good and strong rail links between Manchester and Leeds are really important for your economy in Greater Manchester?

Andy Burnham: I think better rail links would lay a foundation for a more productive northern economy, as I was saying before to Chris Loder. You just have to come here at the moment to see how the options that people have are suboptimal, to say the least. Currently, you could easily spend the best part of 50 minutes on a train between Manchester and Leeds, frequently subject to delays and with passengers standing; there is always pressure on seats. Or you could take your chances on the M62. Those of you who are veterans of that motorway, as I am, will know that you cannot guarantee what time you will arrive in Leeds if you were to set off from Manchester. You would be taking a risk if you set aside anything less than an hour.

What we have at the moment is a situation where people cannot move freely and with certainty across the north. That is holding back the productivity of the northern economy, but it is also leading to a situation where we lose out on investment. Investment follows highly connected



areas. We know that good transport infrastructure brings business investment.

- Q19 **Simon Jupp:** Could I focus for a second on Huddersfield? Looking at option 1, the Huddersfield upgrade on Northern Powerhouse Rail, what do you think about that? What is your assessment of the costs and benefits of that decision?

Andy Burnham: As I said before, it is clear in the technical annexe that there has not been a levelling-up assessment. I keep coming back to that because it is a significant issue. On the day when the levelling-up White Paper is published, we find ourselves in the strange situation that we are considering a railway scheme—£96 billion-worth of investment—that has not been considered for its levelling-up impact.

If I could take a railway consideration, I am not saying it will not bring enhancements, but I want to make two points about it. First, on the building of it, if you are to take a new line out of city centre Manchester to Marsden, where I believe the current infrastructure in that location is very old, so you are taking a new line to existing rail infrastructure that is quite antiquated, it strikes me that you will have a highly disruptive phase in building it. It has been estimated that there would be 15 years of disruption. That has to be considered. You are taking a new railway line into the corridor that at the moment is the line between Leeds and Manchester, and it is clear that there will be significant prolonged disruption if you try to do that.

The second point is that if you have that kind of construct—part new line, part upgrade—you are then going to be running services in the future that mix fast services with local stopping services. The operation of that system will not be as clean as taking a new line via Bradford to Leeds. The original plan was an entirely new line between Manchester and Leeds and then a TransPennine route upgrade on the line we are discussing.

- Q20 **Simon Jupp:** Obviously you are keen to get on and regenerate the places you serve, and improve the communities that you represent. Option 1 will benefit those communities sooner than other options that were on the table, and perhaps the original plans, won't it?

Andy Burnham: Possibly, but I think the disruptive impact has to be considered. If you look towards the west, I know the Mayor of Liverpool City Region thinks that the disruption will be so great in his area that it calls into question whether it is value for money at all.

I want to come back to something I said earlier. I do not believe it is my job to bring the benefits forward a few years. You could say that implicit in your question that is what I should be doing. I believe this plan is the plan for 200 years in the north of England. People will not be making these decisions again in that timeframe. We have to think of it in those terms. If we accept second best again, it is our great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren who have to continue to grow up in a north of



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England that has inferior transport connectivity and a smaller economy than it could otherwise have had.

I would say to this Committee and indeed to the Government, and I do say it to the Government, "Let's get back to the ambition." There were promises made for a new line to Manchester and Leeds for good reason. It would give people a much better way of travelling around, and it would bring economic growth to places that currently do not have enough of it. We have to think about this as a 200-year vision for the north of England and not just bringing it forward a bit. What is the right thing for people across the north in the next two centuries? That is the way I see it.

- Q21 **Simon Jupp:** Forgive me, Andy. I am not keen to speculate on what future transport modes may look like. I am not looking at episodes of "The Jetsons" and thinking that is the solution. Clearly 200 years is a long time away. I imagine that we will not be talking about railways in 200 years' time, will we? Let's get real about it.

Andy Burnham: We are still using railways that were built 150 years ago, so we are currently—

Simon Jupp: Absolutely, and in the south-west we still put up with those services, but—

Andy Burnham: Exactly, so we are—

- Q22 **Simon Jupp:** Just briefly, when you say 200 years' time, you also have to accept that we will be talking about a very outdated mode of transport by that point, surely.

Andy Burnham: You don't know any more than me. As I just said to you, we are still using railway infrastructure in Manchester from the Victorian period. This infrastructure lasts for a very long time. Even if new ways of travelling have been brought through in that time, which I guess there probably will have been, I still think there will be a need to get people around in the traditional ways. Okay, 200 years might be a long time, but this is definitely going to define the north of England for a century, otherwise why are we spending so much time on it? Clearly, it is going to have a huge impact for decades to come on connectivity across the north and the economic stature of the north of England. It is that serious. It is a massive decision. I would not minimise it, if that is what you are doing. This is about people's lives here. We have long accepted second best, and I think what you are hearing now is that we are not going to any more.

Simon Jupp: Thank you.

Chair: Only those who believe in reincarnation will know the answer to that particular question. Let's move on to HS2. I will hand back to Robert Langan.

- Q23 **Robert Langan:** Before we get on to HS2, Andy, I want briefly to thank you and your colleague, Dan Jarvis, for your support in securing the



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upgrade to the capacity of the Hope Valley Line. Construction is about to start, so thank you very much for that.

Moving to another key infrastructure project, HS2, and specifically the 2b western leg, could you give the Committee your views on the benefits of this connection to Manchester and perhaps what the costs are?

Andy Burnham: Yes. I think they will be significant, Robert, as I have said. I am not trying to suggest that there is no value to the current IRP. Of course, there is a significant value.

I have mentioned the benefits to the airport, but it remains the case that we are being asked to make a contribution of hundreds of millions of pounds to the airport station. West Midlands has not been asked to make a contribution to the airport station there. There is no contribution from London and the south-east, so I ask any MP representing a northern constituency to ask why we are the only part of the country being asked to contribute to the cost of the IRP. That said, we still want this benefit. It would hugely benefit Manchester airport. City centre Manchester, even on the current plan, would get significant benefits from HS2 and a new core Northern Powerhouse Rail approach.

It is important for me to put on the table the disbenefits. I mentioned to Ruth Cadbury before the assessment that the new surface station at Piccadilly would be at capacity from day one. There is another point I need to put on the table, Robert. If you were to build it according to the current plan, where HS2 comes over the surface on a stilt-like infrastructure into Manchester Piccadilly, you would have to take it out on the surface, as it would then come towards the east and the Marsden area we were talking about. We believe, and this is very much the view of Manchester City Council, that that would require highly intrusive surface infrastructure in the east of Greater Manchester.

Yes, there are economic benefits but there are definitely community disbenefits from building HS2 and core NPR according to the design or the specification set out in the IRP.

Q24 **Robert Largan:** Thanks, Andy. I think you made a very good and important case about the way HS2 comes in and out of Manchester. I want to push you a bit more on the benefits. You have just said that generically there are some economic benefits. The reason that is so important is that there are members of this Committee, and Members of Parliament, who are still determined to have HS2 stopped altogether.

Greg Smith: Hear, hear.

Robert Largan: So it is very important that, as a key regional leader, you use the chance in this evidence session to hit home and make the case for those benefits so that we can include them in our thinking and in our report. I urge you to go into a bit more detail about those benefits, to help me on this Committee fighting to keep extra investment and expanding HS2 rather than tackling with those who want to take us



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backwards.

Chair: In a very succinct manner, if that is okay, because of the time.

Andy Burnham: There will be economic benefits in terms of more jobs, more investment and a more productive northern economy. There are obviously benefits around the airport as well. Wigan would benefit significantly if the current design is kept.

Greater Manchester would get a significant economic benefit. It would help to level up the north. The point I am making today, Robert, is that it does not deliver what could be achieved in a more maximalist approach. I am not in any way saying that it does not massively improve connectivity to the south of England. It would improve rail capacity. It would bring significant economic benefit.

However, if you build Piccadilly in the way that is currently designed, we actually lose half a million square metres of floor space because the surface railway takes away land to the north of Piccadilly that would otherwise be used for economic development. We estimate that that land could accommodate around 14,000 jobs. A rebuilt Piccadilly as an underground station with the right north-south and east-west connectivity would be like the Canary Wharf of the north. It would be the beating heart of the north of England. It could be a major international centre for investment.

You can see the success story that we have in city centre Manchester. It is building all the while. HS2 will take it even further, even on the current plan of the IRP. The question for the Committee, in my view, is, does it maximise the levelling-up benefits for the north of England? I do not believe it does.

Q25 **Robert Largan:** As someone who commutes from Glossop into Piccadilly very regularly, I wholeheartedly agree with your assessment. Whatever I can do to fight for that investment in Piccadilly I will do.

Andy Burnham: Much appreciated.

Chair: We are falling behind despite a very strong start. I want to bring Greg Smith in on HS2 as well.

Greg Smith: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, Andy.

Andy Burnham: Good morning.

Q26 **Greg Smith:** Back in February 2020 before the Government wrongly gave, in my view—everyone knows my view—the green light to HS2, you made quite a compelling case, and I have it in front of me, in the *Manchester Evening News*. You said that if HS2 was not going to come to Manchester, which was a possibility at the time, we should “Expedite the construction of Northern Powerhouse Rail by reassigning the HS2 team in the North to work alongside Transport for the North. This could deliver benefits for rail passengers in the North in the 2030s rather than having



to wait until the 2040s.” Given the importance that you highlighted in your evidence earlier about the critical east-west routes in the north of England, wouldn’t that still be better than creating a very high-speed route from the north to the south?

Andy Burnham: I still very much hold to what I said, Greg. If you were to ask people here what the most important priority is—west to east connectivity from Liverpool through Manchester and on to Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield, or north-south—they would say it is the former. That is the biggest problem we have. It is the problem I was describing to Ruth Cadbury. As I have always said, if you pin me to a wall and force me to choose east-west connectivity or north-south, we would go east-west.

The point I was making was, why is the north always forced to choose? London does not have to choose between good east-west connectivity and good north-south connectivity. It has both. That is the case that we would make to you. We believe that the Northern Powerhouse vision, as it was originally put forward, was about both. It was about better north-south connectivity on both sides of the country and, as I said before, a critical line going across the north from west to east to bring it all together.

As I say, if you forced me to prioritise, that is how I would prioritise. I would still stand by that, but why should we be forced to do that when other parts of the country are not?

Q27 **Greg Smith:** I appreciate the point you make about London. I think it is important that Government do not make any policy London-centric. I enjoy coming to Manchester. It is a great city to visit. I particularly enjoy it when my party conference comes to Manchester. I know that I can get on a train in Milton Keynes and be in Manchester in under an hour and a half, which is a pretty good service as far as I am concerned.

I accept that there are some capacity issues on the west coast main line that technology could improve for nothing like as much money as HS2, but given that the best-case scenario for HS2 now is about £106 billion for the whole thing, and the Labour peer Lord Berkeley has identified that it could be as high as £165 billion, surely the best case for the north has to be to take that money, whether it is just the Crewe-Manchester bit or, my preference, the whole lot, and reassign it to improving the east-west connections in the north as well as capacity improvements on the west coast main line. That would work for great cities like Manchester, wouldn’t it?

Andy Burnham: The difficult thing is that when you start chopping up a railway it loses the original coherence that it had. Patrick McLoughlin’s scheme had coherence. It did all of it. I think that is what we need to do in this country. Salami-slicing railway schemes in the end gets you to the wrong solutions.



I will give you an example. We have a monument to this in city centre Manchester. It is called the Ordsall chord. They put that in, but then chopped all the other investment on the Castlefield corridor and at Manchester Piccadilly, and do you know what? It does not unlock the full potential of what it could have done. I think the same applies on a bigger scale here. If you say, "You can have one or the other but you can't have a coherent railway," you are constantly going to minimise the full benefit. As I said, if you forced me to choose, I would choose the way I described.

Q28 Greg Smith: That is helpful. My last question is this. Do you accept, largely as a proponent of High Speed 2, that the building of High Speed 2—I accept that you make a case for the benefits it will bring to Manchester and the north—equally brings abject misery to the communities that the railway has to be built through between London, Manchester and potentially beyond in the future?

Andy Burnham: I do, and I am talking to you now from one of those communities. I live in Golborne, a place that gives its name to the link that comes off HS2 that I mentioned before and currently will go to Wigan. The Hendy review has maybe suggested—*[Inaudible.]* My apologies for the dog. Yes, I am aware of that, but I would rather be building railways than roads in these areas. I think you have to embrace a more zero-carbon approach to transport, even if it creates impacts in the areas affected. I do not think we can take a "not in my back yard" approach. I am not saying that you are, but I do not think you can. The country needs the right infrastructure for the future. That is the approach I would take. Yes, it is not easy. I know that as somebody who was the MP for this area and still lives here.

Greg Smith: We will take it that the dog is at least anti-HS2.

Andy Burnham: You can take that one. That is definitely a win for you.

Chair: You have one supporter there, Greg. Let's move on to the effect on Manchester. I am going to bring in Rob Langan and Chris Loder. I would ask you both to cover this by 10.25, so perhaps you can halve the time. Rob, we will start with you.

Q29 Robert Langan: I think we have already covered a lot of my questions. I was going to ask about Piccadilly station, your views on that and whether the current station is fit for purpose or needs to be improved. I think we have already covered that.

Andy Burnham: Could I say one further thing, Rob, that maybe I have not said so far? The station design I described to you before, with it coming in on the surface and going out on the surface, is a turn-back station. I ask the Committee to consider whether that is what we should be building as the highest standard of railway infrastructure that this country can manage. That obviously means trains going in, waiting for the driver to go to the other end and then coming back out the other way. For a whole heap of reasons, we think that is a suboptimal design. A box-style construction where you have different services on different



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levels, as we see in other parts of Europe, feels to me to be the right solution for Piccadilly.

Robert Largan: Thanks very much.

Q30 **Chris Loder:** Andy, I am conscious that Manchester Piccadilly today has two through platforms. Do you think there need to be more through platforms than there are currently, or will that not really help your case?

Andy Burnham: Absolutely, Chris. I completely feel that. It is what I was saying to Ruth Cadbury before. We have long argued that. The two through platforms that you mention are platforms 13 and 14. If you are at Piccadilly, they are above street level as you come into the station from the main ground-level entrance, not the one on the slope but the one on the other side of the station.

If you stand there, you can see the jumble of trains that come through that area one after another, almost like a tube service. We have long said that platforms 15 and 16 are needed in that area to create more through capacity. I completely agree with you about that.

Q31 **Chris Loder:** Could I briefly ask you for your opinion on the effectiveness of Transport for the North? I come to this so far with the view that Transport for the North has had a lot of money over the years, yet some of us struggle to see what it has actually delivered. I am just wondering whether you have a view on that and whether you think it has taken the Government to intervene with a plan such as this in order to bring real, tangible rail benefits to Manchester and the north.

Andy Burnham: I am a strong supporter of Transport for the North, and obviously you are about to hear from them. Let me explain why, Chris. I joined the board in April 2018, a month before the rail chaos. I put it to you and this Committee that Transport for the North did more than any other body to get underneath the reasons for the timetable collapse in May 2018.

Q32 **Chris Loder:** Andy, on that point, Transport for the North signed off that timetable, did they not, and therefore have a degree of responsibility in its failure?

Andy Burnham: I guess all railway bodies do, but they do not control the timetable. Obviously, that—

Q33 **Chris Loder:** But they signed off and approved it, as far as I understand.

Andy Burnham: —is a function of Network Rail and the industry. There is a degree of culpability shared.

Q34 **Chris Loder:** Coming back to my question, it was about the effectiveness of Transport for the North.

Andy Burnham: I was about to answer your question, if you wouldn't mind. It was Transport for the North that requested the appointment of a troubleshooter to understand why we had seen such a meltdown in



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services across the north. Richard George came in and actually did a phenomenal job that led to the creation of the Manchester recovery taskforce and the stabilisation of rail services. It was Transport for the North that called for the removal of the franchise from the failing Arriva Northern service. That was a Transport for the North intervention.

Q35 Chris Loder: I am sorry to stop you, but the Chair is keeping an eye on me for time. I understand that in terms of operational things, but the interest of the plan is really the infrastructure and the investment in making tangible things happen rather than management of service changes. The question I am really asking you is, how effective do you believe Transport for the North has been in actually getting infrastructure done, built and planned for?

Andy Burnham: You asked me a broad question about the effectiveness overall of Transport for the North, but allow me to turn to infrastructure. I think they were tasked to deliver a new line. As I said, it was a prime ministerial commitment in 2015, building on the Osborne commitment for a high-speed rail service. They were doing that. Their plan included Bradford. It was a new line, which I think is a cleaner approach than merging a new line with upgraded infrastructure.

As the TFN proposal was emerging, people were compromising. I was part of that process. We were making compromises with Sheffield. Everybody was not getting everything they wanted. We were compromising within an envelope. The north was speaking with one voice through TFN because we all supported that line. That is a difficult thing to do—to get an entire region the size of the north of England to speak with one voice. We were speaking with one voice to Government to say, “This is the plan we support,” and that voice was ignored.

They were effective, in my view. They were both developing an effective plan for a workable railway and effective in bringing stakeholder support from all parts of the north, political and business, behind that plan.

Q36 Chris Loder: It feels to me, with the exception of Bradford, which we all recognise, that across the north there is fairly widespread support for the Government’s plan, even though I recognise that there are some things that others might like in addition.

Andy Burnham: Can I just say to you, though, that the TFN plan, even on the Government’s assessment—let me quote it again—“provides the greatest increase in capacity and connectivity of any options”? That was the TFN plan.

Q37 Chris Loder: What was the cost of that plan, if you know?

Andy Burnham: I said to you before that it was in the region of £70 billion.

Chris Loder: Did you say £17 billion?



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Andy Burnham: It was £70 billion. It was the plan that they had been asked to deliver. It was a prime ministerial commitment on an entirely new line. They can only work to what they are asked to do. That is what they were doing. All I can say to you again is that the plan was never subject to a levelling-up assessment. The benefits that the plan would have delivered to places like Bradford, which I am pleased you acknowledge, Chris, would have stacked up if you had taken a wider value for money assessment of it.

Q38 **Chris Loder:** I think I have one minute left. My understanding was that Transport for the North cost in the region of £8 million a year. I am happy to be corrected if I have that wrong. The last time I looked it was about £8 million a year. In your opinion, was that £8 million a year an effective use of taxpayers' money to achieve some of the things you have outlined?

Q39 **Andy Burnham:** Yes, absolutely, because the north of England was able to express its wishes on transport in a way it had never been able to before. We got improvements to the timetable through the troubleshooter. We got a change on the franchise, which we were the first ones to call for. Guards were kept on the trains. I think it would have been a backward move by this Government to remove guards from trains. A TFN intervention kept them on. TFN's input to the timetable through the Rail North Committee has ensured that the communities of the north of England have been better represented in timetable considerations than ever before. An emphatic yes is the answer to your question.

Karl McCartney: Andy, hello.

Andy Burnham: Hi, how are you?

Q40 **Karl McCartney:** I am very well. Short sharp answers and questions, hopefully. Here we go. Do you understand the meaning of the phrase "Do not bite the hand that feeds you"?

Andy Burnham: I do understand it, yes.

Q41 **Karl McCartney:** Super. Do you think that your strategy might be slightly schizophrenic? In private, you are saying, "Please sir, can I have some more?", like Oliver; in public, you try to beat the Government up like the Incredible Hulk. Is that delivering for you and the people of Manchester?

Andy Burnham: You are kind of saying that we should just get what we are given. That is what you are saying, isn't it? But how about we get what we were promised? It is actually your Government that promised us all of this.

Q42 **Karl McCartney:** How much money are you raising towards your transport infrastructure plans?



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Andy Burnham: Let me come back at you more positively, Karl, if I may. I have said now that to fund our preferred option we are prepared to consider a local contribution. I have already said to you today that we are contributing to the IRP at Manchester airport anyway, the only area in the whole country.

Q43 **Karl McCartney:** But Manchester airport's profits are going to increase, surely, with improved infrastructure.

Andy Burnham: Yes, that is why we said we have not ruled it out, but I would like to take that notion further. When we build transport infrastructure in this country, it raises the value of the land around it. If you look at Crossrail 1, you can look at that right the way along that line. I make an admission here. I was Chief Secretary to the Treasury that funded that major piece of transport infrastructure in London—

Q44 **Karl McCartney:** And I fought to keep Crossrail alive back in the mid-1990s at the Corporation of London, so we both have history with it.

Andy Burnham: Yes. I am proud, and I bet you are as well. It was the right thing to do for our capital city, and we all want to see it prosper. If you look at land values today compared with what they were in 2007 when we agreed the Crossrail scheme, they have massively increased. Why are we not capturing some of that uplift in land value to fund the infrastructure we actually need, rather than taking a very traditional DFT/Treasury approach and just building a reduced, pared-back railway?

Q45 **Karl McCartney:** I am going to try to nail you down with some figures. You have plans to fleece motorists in and around Manchester. How much of the money you are going to raise are you going to plough back into either roads or rail?

Andy Burnham: Karl, that is a Government direction on the 10 councils of Greater Manchester, just as they have put directions on Birmingham and other cities. I am afraid it is a plan that emanates from your Government. Any funds raised would not be available for this purpose. What I am talking to you about is a system of land value capture, which we are absolutely prepared to consider. If you consider Bradford, what would the real—

Q46 **Karl McCartney:** I want to get back to my point, which is about the roads in and around Manchester which are very important to lots of people not just in your area but in the hinterland of Manchester as well. If you bring in the plans that you have, and I presume you are aware how many people commute either by rail or by road in and around the north, are you aware of those figures?

Andy Burnham: Yes, of course. The thing is, Karl, because we have not had investment in transport infrastructure in the north for decades under all Governments, including the one I was in—so I am not making a political point—those roads are highly congested, as I said before, like the M62 and the M60. Consequently, levels of air pollution from road traffic



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are very high. There are 152 points in Greater Manchester where they breach legal limits. That is a reflection of the fact that we are a geography where everyone is passing through Greater Manchester. We have a lot of traffic. Secondly, the infrastructure does not support the passing through of all of that traffic, be it by road or rail, and consequently we have a bigger pollution problem.

Q47 **Karl McCartney:** What do you believe the figures are for people who commute in the morning using either road or rail?

Andy Burnham: You would have to be very precise on what you are actually asking for.

Q48 **Karl McCartney:** I am asking you how many people use road, whether it is buses or cars, to get to work versus using the railway in Manchester.

Andy Burnham: I could give you the percentages. The percentages are that the vast majority of people use their cars because—

Q49 **Karl McCartney:** What is the percentage?

Andy Burnham: I would say around 50% of people are using their car.

Q50 **Karl McCartney:** I think you will find that it is a lot more.

Andy Burnham: I could give you the breakdown. It is a reflection of the fact that public transport is just not good enough for a lot of people in Greater Manchester, so they have to rely on their car. The public transport—

Q51 **Karl McCartney:** The answer, as far as I am concerned, is not fleecing motorists, but that seems to be something that you seem to be happy to do with the people in Manchester.

Andy Burnham: You are not very well informed, I would say, for a member of the Transport Select Committee—

Karl McCartney: I think I am.

Andy Burnham: One second. Cars are not included in the Greater Manchester clean air zone in the way that they are in Birmingham. You talk about fleecing motorists; you need to research your facts a bit before you make those kinds of statements.

Chair: Thank you, Karl. Let's move to engagement with Government. This is our last section, and then I just want to mop up on a couple of points that have come up. Grahame Morris.

Grahame Morris: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, Andy.

Andy Burnham: Good morning, Grahame.

Q52 **Grahame Morris:** It is great to see you. I am going to crack on because we have limited time. You have already covered some of the ground, but can I pick up on the point you made originally to one of the first



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questions about Government spend in the planning element of the IRP? It has not been optimised or maximised, and you thought it could have been done in a better way.

Do you think the north's voice has been heard in Government in planning rail improvements? We know that you are supportive of Transport for the North, but have the Government listened to the representations made by you and others in respect of planning rail improvements?

Andy Burnham: Thanks for the question, Grahame. I would certainly say that the current Transport Secretary is very approachable, and he creates plenty of opportunities for us to speak with him. I thank him for that. Your question is, have they listened? It is hard to answer that question positively because, as I said before, TFN spoke with one voice to Government in saying, "This is the scheme that we all want." Obviously, what happened in the IRP was that a very different scheme was imposed. I think in those circumstances it is hard to say that the IRP has listened to the voice of the north of England.

The Committee will have its own views on this. In my judgment, although people might profess support, because we know the way it works down in Westminster, I imagine that MPs of all parties, including Government MPs, in their heart of hearts will know that this plan is not the right plan for the north of England.

Q53 Grahame Morris: Presumably, you have a similar view in relation to HS2 because you mentioned Huddersfield, Bradford and so on. I will leave you to answer that; I am not putting words into your mouth. On a point that you made a little earlier, Andy—I know we are short of time—about the east-west connection from Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, the original Northern Powerhouse Rail was also Hull and Newcastle. Yesterday, I met some people from LNER who pointed out the big obstruction. You mentioned yourself cutting journey times and whether that is a trade-off with capacity. The best that we can do is on the section north of York, where it takes me three and a half hours to get from Newcastle to Liverpool, which is 120 miles. It is the same time as it takes to get to London, which is twice the distance.

We can only run six trains an hour north of York because it is single carriageway, yet none of that has been addressed in the integrated rail plan. Have you had some input into that in terms of maximising the east-west economic benefits?

Andy Burnham: Massively. I fully supported North of Tyne Mayor Jamie Driscoll and his calls for the Leamside line to be fully integrated into the plan. Similarly, I supported Dan Jarvis, as Robert Langan said before. Manchester to Sheffield connectivity is nowhere near as good as it should be.

I think the right thing for the country to do is to build NPR in its fullest possible form. The figure I gave before was for the fullest version of NPR. That would rebalance the economy of the country. It would mean a



stronger north of England, I think for centuries. Others can have their own view about the impact of the investment. I think it would change the fortunes of the north permanently and therefore bring ongoing benefits. The north might become less reliant on the need for investment and support. You would have a more self-sufficient northern economy. That is the argument, I guess, that I am making here this morning.

Q54 Grahame Morris: I have one more question, on effective engagement and speaking with one voice, which is quite unique, given the diverse political views within Transport for the North. They have come up with a set of priorities. It is an integrated package.

How might engagement in the future be more effective? We have a plethora of different bodies. Now we have GB Rail. Is that part of the problem in not getting the desired outcomes? You mentioned optimising economic benefits. Is there too much confusion and a plethora of different organisations? What is your suggestion to the Committee to improve outcomes and engagement?

Andy Burnham: I definitely agree with you, Grahame. There needs to be simplification. Maybe GBR helps a bit with that—obviously we have a very fragmented railway system—but so does Transport for the North. To come back to what I was saying before, it is not easy to get every council and every LEP in the north of England behind one plan. It is not easy at all, but we did get behind the original plan that the team at Transport for the North brought forward. I think that was some considerable achievement. Bear in mind that they were getting behind a plan that they were promised. New lines and connectivity; that was the original Osborne promise.

I would not underestimate the extent to which Transport for the North makes railway planning much easier, because you can have one conversation with all the different geographies and organisations of the north. This is what I think the Committee needs to look at as well. The reason we have ended up in a messy place is that the railways are way too fragmented. The more coherence we have, the better. The reason we have got into problems here, and the point I made before, is that there was no levelling-up assessment of the integrated rail plan. The Committee really must not lose that point. On the day that the levelling-up White Paper is published, we have a railway plan that has not done a levelling-up assessment. That is clearly a major flaw in the IRP. That approach of just imposing, which it did, a new design on the north without any real consultation has got the response that we have all seen, particularly from Liverpool, Bradford and Leeds.

Grahame Morris: And don't forget the north-east. Thank you very much, Andy. I've got my question for the statement this afternoon.

Q55 Chair: The north-east will never be forgotten as long as you are a member of this Committee, Grahame.

Mayor Burnham, there are a couple of points to mop up, and then we will



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say thank you. In a way, they both relate to the benefits of earlier delivery and whether that needs to be better understood and recognised.

The first is around Piccadilly station. You have talked about the fact that you would prefer a solution that goes underground rather than on stilts. HS2 Ltd assess that building an underground station would take longer to build, delay the HS2 Manchester spur from opening by around a decade and cause significant disruption to the city centre. Who is right: you or HS2 Ltd?

Andy Burnham: It probably would take longer to build, but the judgment I am putting forward to you, Chair, is build the right solution rather than build the wrong solution more quickly. I do not believe that when HS2 make their points about disruption they are considering the permanent disruption that would be left behind in the communities east of Manchester from very intrusive overland infrastructure. They are only looking at this from a railway disruption point of view, I think, and not from the wider point of view of disruption to the rest of the community.

We would be able to say to our residents, "Bear with this because it is the right solution for Manchester in the long, long term." At the moment we are not able to say that. We are going to be disrupted without being able to be fully clear that the pain is worth the end result. As I say, we are not convinced that the end result is the best result that we could get.

When it comes to the IRP just beyond Manchester city centre, I need to say again that the assessment on taking the new line into the old line at Marsden is that there will be 15 years of disruption on that line. That is not in the city centre, granted, but it is disruption between Manchester and Leeds on our principal rail corridor between the two cities. That has not been considered yet in their assessment, in my view, and it needs to be because it could have a devastating economic impact in that period.

What I am trying to say is that you could build their design a little more quickly, let's say, but you would actually be more disruptive in the building of it than if you were to build an entirely new line between Manchester and Leeds, because you are not then interfering with existing infrastructure.

Q56 Chair: Thank you. The second point relates to the much talked about proposals between Manchester and Leeds. Later this month, the Committee is going up to Leeds and Bradford to see some of this for itself. Currently, the train journey takes 55 minutes between Manchester and Leeds. The original proposals would have cut that down to 29 minutes. The new proposals are 33 minutes. That would be brought in a decade earlier and would be £18 billion less in spend. For four minutes, doesn't that seem like the right solution?

Andy Burnham: It depends on what you prioritise the most, doesn't it? Maybe other people have different views. If we go back to the original debate about HS2, it was sold on journey times and then, over time, it moved to capacity. I keep coming back to what Ruth Cadbury's question



elicited because it was a critical question. I value capacity, connectivity and reliability more highly than journey times. I think the north desperately needs extra rail capacity. Freight cannot go across the north very easily at all at the moment because we just do not have that capacity. Massive benefits come from the connectivity of linking a city like Bradford.

Q57 **Chair:** I see that, but I am struck by the DFT's evidence that states that only 650 people from Bradford, which is 0.3%, worked in Manchester, of whom only 105 travelled by train. No doubt more would travel by train with a faster service, but it is quite a small number of people. I come back to that £18 billion figure.

Andy Burnham: As you said, it is linked to the poor nature of transport connectivity. The assessment from DFT says that the full Northern Powerhouse Rail would provide the greatest increase in capacity and connectivity of any of the options.

The Committee will have to make a judgment, Chair. It is my judgment that the railway proposed in the IRP would be highly disruptive in the building and operationally less efficient because it merges a new line with the existing local stopping services. Therefore, in the long run it does not provide the cleaner, better solution that I think the north needs.

Chair: Thank you very much, Mayor Burnham. That concludes our session. I want to say a big thank you for giving us your time and your evidence. We will no doubt speak with you again on this or another matter.

Andy Burnham: Thanks a lot, and thank you all Members of the Committee for your questions.