HOUSE OF COMMONS

# Transport Committee

## Oral evidence: Investing in the railway, HC 257

## Monday 1 September 2014

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 1 September 2014.

Witness evidence

Watch the meeting

Members present: Mrs Louise Ellman (Chair), Sarah Champion, Jim Dobbin, Jim Fitzpatrick, Jason McCartney, Mr Adrian Sanders, Chloe Smith, Graham Stringer, Martin Vickers

Questions 193-269

*Witnesses:* **David Brown**, Director General, Merseytravel, representing Rail North, **Dr Jon Lamonte**, Chief Executive, Transport for Greater Manchester, representing One North, **Dr Ian Kelly**, Chief Executive Officer, Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce, **Councillor Chris Shaw**, Leader, North East Lincolnshire Council, and **Councillor Liz Redfern**, Leader, North Lincolnshire Council, gave evidence.

**Q193 Chair:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the Transport Select Committee. Could you tell us who you are—your name and organisation?

***David Brown***: I am David Brown. I am the chief executive of Merseytravel, but today representing Rail North.

***Dr Lamonte***: I am Jon Lamonte, chief executive of Transport for Greater Manchester, but today representing One North.

***Dr Kelly***: I am Ian Kelly, chief executive of Hull and Humber chamber of commerce.

***Councillor Redfern***: I am Liz Redfern, leader of North Lincolnshire council.

***Councillor Shaw***: I am Chris Shaw, leader of North East Lincolnshire council.

**Q194 Chair:** Thank you very much. Do you think the north receives a fair share of investment in the railway? Who wants to start? Does anybody think it does?

***Councillor Redfern***: No, it does not.

**Q195 Chair:** Right. Who would like to start, to tell us to what degree you think it does not? Do you have any observations on that?

***David Brown***: I can start; I am sure all my colleagues will want to chip in. Historically, there is quite a lot of evidence; PTEG have provided evidence to this Committee previously on the spend per head on infrastructure, particularly rail infrastructure, in the English regions compared with London and the south-east and elsewhere. It has always been significantly less per head of population in capital terms, for infrastructure projects.

There has been a significant increase in the volume of spend on rail infrastructure projects such as the northern hub and the electrification programme that is ongoing, but it is still quite a small amount compared with significant rail projects such as Crossrail. We believe that the north gets less than you would expect for a significant percentage of the population of England. There is an opportunity to address that by investing more in infrastructure and also by investing in the necessary revenue that would go alongside that infrastructure.

**Q196 Chair:** Do you think that that underinvestment has affected economic growth in the north?

***David Brown***: There is a lot of evidence that transport is essential to improving economic performance, and that the economy of the north as a region—as a significant population and economy—has been held back by the lack of transport and rail investment per se.

***Councillor Shaw***: I can only go on what I know about underinvestment in regeneration and job creation. The Humber ports—Immingham alone—generate 25% of all UK rail freight; 30% of all fuel for electricity supply comes out of the Humber ports of Immingham, yet, because of that, we have a rail infrastructure that cannot cope with the demand. We therefore have passenger services running at 42 mph, when they are capable of running at 100 mph, because the tracks cannot deal with the loads that are being placed upon them at the moment. By investing in rail freight and in the rail infrastructure on the south Humber bank, we could both increase the traffic flows out of Immingham, which are already substantial, and speed up the rail services delivering the passenger service in that area, which would mean that we got better utilisation of the equipment we already have. As David says, we have to be very careful; some of the stock that is being used is 25 or 26 years old and isn't capable of running at higher speeds.

**Q197 Chair:** Councillor Redfern, are there any particular aspects of this underinvestment that have affected your area in terms of economic growth?

***Councillor Redfern***: Absolutely. In the last three years we have seen a substantial increase in businesses relocating and establishing on the south Humber bank. One of the very first questions they ask is about rail connectivity, so that is really vital when we are looking at connectivity, whether it is on the north or the south bank. Also important to note are skills for our young people. We have just managed to secure £12 million investment in a university training college. We have to take 60% of the students from within north Lincolnshire and 40% of them from elsewhere, so train connectivity is really important for training, as well as in attracting business.

**Q198 Chair:** Dr Lamonte, One North is really all about regeneration and transport, isn't it? How strongly do you feel about underinvestment in rail in the north? What difference has it made?

***Dr Lamonte***: In the One North report—this is our early work—we were able to look at comparators in Randstad and the Ruhr and the power of agglomeration of the cities in those areas, to see how they had manifestly got great economic growth through joining themselves up. Although we would welcome the northern hub and have started to see that delivered, it does not begin to give us the sort of economic benefits from agglomeration that we see in our European partners. The opportunity to do rather more on rail investment is there for all to see.

**Q199 Chair:** Dr Kelly, is it the view of business in the Hull area that there are problems because of underinvestment in rail? Is that the big issue, or is there some other problem?

***Dr Kelly***: Madam Chair, when you were kind enough to bring your Committee to Hull a couple of years ago, we highlighted the very significant differentials in spend between London and the south-east and Yorkshire and the Humber, with the Humber at the very bottom. While there are peaks and troughs, in many respects what we as business are arguing for is to ensure that essential transport capacity is in place. We would not ask for very many millions to be spent on the Humber, such as on Crossrail, but you know as well as we do that, while there is an issue about spending and response to the demand that you have down in London, and about congestion, actually you need economic development and new business growth in areas such as the Humber as well, to get in place the inward investment we have opportunities for with renewables, and to get economic regeneration really motoring.

**Q200 Chair:** One North has ambitious proposals, but how do those proposals link with existing programme planning? How are they linked with Network Rail planning and with the Chancellor's suggestion of a High Speed 3? That seemed to be announced to the media, but when we have questioned officials since it seemed to be a little unclear exactly what it is. Can you explain to us how One North's plans fit in?

***Dr Lamonte***: The linkage is that One North was created out of David Higgins's challenge to the north to say, "It is not just about HS2. It is also about connectivity across the north, east-west." By that I mean Liverpool to Hull and across to Newcastle. If only you could do as much about connecting those, you would see real economic change and benefit.

That work coincided with Sir David Higgins's further work on HS2; I believe he will report on that later this year. The north wanted to look at it not just from a rail perspective but through a multi-modal approach, because it is absolutely not just about rail—it has to involve strategic roads and other bits of connectivity as well, such as connectivity in data. It was a multi-modal approach to joining up the north in a far better, more coherent way. Some of the work is being done in parallel, but we connect absolutely with Network Rail, who are also working with HS2. We use the same information and we talk to the same people. We talk to the Highways Agency as well.

**Q201 Chair:** It has been suggested that One North's proposals are about Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield, but that there is not much in them for areas such as Hull. Is that right?

***Dr Lamonte***: No, that is not right, Madam Chair. We have been involved with Hull. We referenced it in the report, and the further work has to take that into account. Hull has invited us to take the next meeting of One North to Hull to have a look for ourselves.

***Councillor Redfern***: While the five cities are important, this is about the whole of the northern region. I mentioned that we have one of the largest enterprise zones on the Humber bank, creating 4,000 new jobs, and, with indirect jobs, up to 10,000. As I said, we have to look at wealth creation and, where we can, to work with cities, but the south Humber bank plays a really major part for the very first time. If we see an increase in rail connectivity, it will be a real win-win for the north. That is really important; it is once in a lifetime. We are here to see that strategy in the next five, 10 or 15 years.

**Q202 Chair:** Dr Kelly, are you satisfied that One North really is about the north and not just selected parts of the north?

***Dr Kelly***: The latest messages are very welcome. Philip Larkin talked about Hull being at the end of the line, but one of the members of your Committee feels that Cleethorpes and Grimsby are more of a Cinderella than even Hull itself. While Chris Garnett at GNER was telling us that he could hardly run one service in the morning and one back at night, Hull Trains gave us seven a day, which has put Hull on the map and done very nicely. From that point of view, it is absolutely essential for Grimsby and Cleethorpes, for example, to keep connectivity to Manchester and that key east-west connection, just as—to follow on from that, behind Martin, Austin and our other MPs—we are hoping that eventually we will also have a Grimsby-Cleethorpes line direct to London.

**Q203 Chair:** Councillor Shaw, are you satisfied that One North is operating in the interests of your area as well as other parts of the north?

***Councillor Shaw***: One North is doing a sterling job in bringing the cities together, and I am glad to hear about Hull. However, there is more to the north than just the five major cities, or the extra city of Hull. Jobs, growth and the regeneration of areas are more outside the cities. The cities have a vibrant role to play, but so do the other areas. I am a bit concerned that the smaller areas do not have a voice and are not sitting around the table making the decisions. There needs to be a more open and transparent partnership in Rail North than there is at the moment.

**Q204 Martin Vickers:** Unlike Dr Kelly, I am not convinced by the warm words from Dr Lamonte about One North. If you read through their document, you see very little, if any, reference to the Hull and Humber region; you certainly do not see any reference to northern Lincolnshire. Yet it states quite clearly that your aims are to improve connectivity—I wrote it down—"into and out of the area." As has been pointed out, your little five-city-region map quite distinctly does not include Hull and the Humber. First, would you like your five city-regions to have better connections to Hull and northern Lincolnshire? If so, what proposals would you like to see put in place?

***Dr Lamonte***: To pick up the first point, this was originally devised by the five cities joining together—that was the start for this—but clearly—

**Q205 Martin Vickers:** Can I interrupt and ask why Hull and the Humber region were not included in the original?

***Dr Lamonte***: It was the five core city leaders who picked up the gauntlet from Sir David Higgins. That is just the way it started. However, it became clear very quickly that it was actually about joining together SuperPort in Liverpool, the ports out on the Humber and Teesport, as well as the airports, and trying to look for those connectivity points.

In terms of the two bits of work, the first bit, to which you referred, was really a scoping piece. It was done over only two months. It was always emphasised that the subsequent bit of work would get into detailed propositions. That bit of work has yet to start. In terms of governance, to include other areas outside the cities, various propositions have been put to Sir Richard Leese about what that might look like. He has not come out and opined on that yet, but he will within the next week or two. We will then be able to see how all the areas can get involved in this.

**Q206 Chloe Smith:** I wonder whether you can help me with your views on how long some of these aspirations will take. Councillor Redfern, I note your choice of words when you say that such things are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and that you are planning ahead for five, 10, 15 years and so on. We all also know the periods involved in either Network Rail or franchising and that they are not overnight things. Have you sat back and discussed in any of your capacities how long you expect it will take to bring about some of your aspirations? This is an extremely open question. I don't mind who starts.

***David Brown***: I can start. Rail North is looking at the next franchises for TransPennine and Northern, so the time limits are fairly fixed. They all start in February 2016 and work forward for between seven and nine years, so we are quite focused on a snapshot in time. We believe that, because it is so fixed, now is the right time to include within the specification for those franchises the operational requirements that will make the most of the infrastructure that is being provided. If you do not do it now—Councillor Redfern's point—you have missed that opportunity for quite a long time, so now is the time to build in requirements around smart ticketing, upgrades to and replacement of rolling stock, and service enhancements, to make the most of the electrification that is being produced. For us, on the rail franchising side, it is clearer cut because the infrastructure planning that has been taking place over the last 10 years is now coming to fruition on the ground. We need to make sure that we operationalise that through the franchising process. There is a slightly longer time frame for infrastructure.

***Dr Lamonte***: The One North report looked at a time line out to 2030, to deliver it in roughly five-year chunks. That happens to coincide with the Highways Agency route-based strategy, which is about five years, and the five-year Network Rail horizon. We thought those were reasonable chunks of time to do these things, so that you can build up through electrification and improving rolling stock to some of the more challenging pieces, where you need tunnelling, which is why you get up to 2030 for any tunnel pieces across the Pennines. That is how we thought it would roughly work. The further work will be to refine that.

***Councillor Shaw***: All I can say is that we have an east of the Pennines rail grouping, which is made up of Derbyshire county council, East Riding of Yorkshire, Hull, Lincolnshire county council, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and Nottingham. We have all written to Rail North and expressed our concerns about what we feel is the lack of consultation with authorities east of the Pennines in the Rail North bid. We have written to Sir Richard and asked him to provide clarification where things have been signed off without consultation with smaller authorities. It has been done by the five core cities and not by a Rail North group, as we would like.

It is not a one size fits all. We do not want to find ourselves put into the sidings by any prospects coming forward from Rail North that could be detrimental. I do not think for one moment that it is meant to be detrimental, but that will be an outcome of the scheme going forward unless everybody is fully consulted on what is happening. Because we are looking at certain specific time scales, I think some of us will fall between the tracks on that.

**Q207 Chloe Smith:** Taking that point for a second, Councillor Shaw, how long do you think is reasonable both to consult on and then to achieve results for some of the significant projects that are on this shopping list?

***Councillor Shaw***: We should not look at set time scales. We have extended franchises before if there was a need to do so. We want to make sure that whatever goes forward as the future of rail in the north is done correctly and is not rushed to hit the time scales that are asked for, which can be moved and, therefore, can be artificially set.

***Councillor Redfern***: It is about the north, and not about the five cities. When I went over to Manchester about three or four weeks ago, I took David to task about the consultation. It is important, because we have our facts and we now have wealth creation on the Humber for the very first time. We are looking at offshore wind and engineering. There is increased interest in the port. We now have one of the major helicopter places coming, with Bristow and so on coming to service that, so things are moving at a fast pace. I do not want to be involved in meetings for meetings' sake or feasibility study after feasibility study—I am here for facts. We know the facts and we know the inquiries that we are getting on the bank. Three or four years ago we had large job losses, but there is a total reversal at the moment. The Humber is the place to invest, and I am really pleased about that.

***Dr Kelly***: I want to reinforce that point. We are always delighted when London does well. That applies equally to the great renaissance in Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds, but our moment is potentially coming. There is cheap, flat land. In the Humber, we have the fourth largest trading estuary in Europe. In that sense, dare I say it, it is bigger than Liverpool in terms of growth; that is what our people—certainly ABP—would tell us. With offshore renewables and trade into Europe, the opportunity for growth for a Cinderella part of the world should be maximised, not least because some of the deprivation levels in wards in Grimsby and parts of Scunthorpe, as well as Hull, are worse than virtually anywhere in the country. If we can maximise the transport opportunities to build on our own economic development strategies—where we have, with the likes of Hull Trains, grasped opportunities ourselves and made things happen—the opportunities to solve some of your problems in central Government with deprivation levels will be on the table. That is why any institutional support you have to help our friends remember our needs is all for the better.

**Q208 Chloe Smith:** Dr Kelly, I have heard it said that the electrification project in the current control period has come about now only because it was a twinkle in someone's eye 25 years ago. You are an academic, so you might take a longer historical view of these things. Is that the genuine political reality of how long it takes to get something delivered?

***Dr Kelly***: It is a long time since I was a practising academic as opposed to a businessman. What I know from listening to our business leaders, whether ABP, Tata, Humberside airport or Clugston—big businesses in our part of the world—is that transport infrastructure is the key, and if you give us the tools, whether it be Hull Trains or tackling the bridge tolls, as the Chancellor did, releasing £18 million-worth of growth into our economy over the past couple of years, we have responded to the challenge and generated wealth and growth. That takes time, as you say, but recently I brought in a dozen inward investors from Denmark, where they are looking at offshore wind and what they are doing to combine with our local companies. They came in via Manchester. At the end of the month, we are going out there to the British-Danish chamber with Martin to explore inward investment again. Unless you have decent transport links to bring them into the patch, and that is from Manchester, we simply look like provincial hicks who cannot deliver on an agenda that they see as vital and we see as a marvellous opportunity. That direct link to Manchester airport, which Manchester airport has also supported, and Humberside airport, is critical. If we lose that, we are going backwards, and that is a failure of, dare I say it, Government policy and of the rail industry generally.

**Q209 Chair:** Dr Lamonte, you spoke about the funding periods that you are looking at for One North, which are related to the periods for rail and the Highways Agency. Have you been given any indication that the money will be found?

***Dr Lamonte***: When the Chancellor assisted the launch of the One North report, he indicated that, if cases could be made, money would be made available, which we took as an encouraging sign.

**Q210 Chair:** Has he repeated that since the launch?

***Dr Lamonte***: I have not heard that.

**Q211 Chair:** But he said that the money could be made available.

***Dr Lamonte***: Absolutely.

**Q212 Chair:** And you took that as a commitment.

***Dr Lamonte***: We took that as a positive sign.

**Q213 Chair:** Let me turn now to Rail North, which I know is connected with that. What would you say were the specific challenges for both the Northern franchise and the TransPennine Express franchise?

***David Brown***: The challenge we have is that we have had franchises that were let twice on a no-growth basis. For over 10 years, the theory was that there would be no growth in those rail services, but, as colleagues have said today, there has been significant growth across the north in rail usage, despite the economic position. There has been steady growth every year, despite the fact that there has been no significant investment in rolling stock, station facilities or infrastructure, so we now have significant capacity problems in certain places. We have significant issues relating to the quality and quantity of rolling stock, particularly on commuter flows. We have problems of people not being able to make journeys because services do not run at the times of day they would expect them to, or that they do so using aged rolling stock that is too small.

We have the challenge of very large franchises—Northern is very large—trying to grow to meet the growth that occurred previously and also to meet predicted growth. Colleagues have talked about continued economic growth, not only on the Humber but also in the cities—the Liverpool city-region and so on. We need a franchise that allows us to provide the services that are necessary, at the quality and value for money that are necessary. That is the challenge: making sure that the revenue funding for those franchises is adequate to meet both the expectations of existing users and economic growth. We can then provide services to make the most of the infrastructure that is being funded through Network Rail—electrification and the northern hub. That work is actually happening; lines will be electrified and additional capacity across the north will be provided. If we do not build into future franchises the requirement for those train services to operate using better trains than currently operate, we will lock out for between seven and nine years the ability to make the most of that infrastructure.

**Q214 Graham Stringer:** That takes me straight to the point I was going to make. Network Rail tell us that the investment in infrastructure—electrification and the improvement of lines—is going to be there. The question I am interested in is will there be any trains to run on it? Can we start with the small and move on to the big? What has happened with the Todmorden curve?

***David Brown***: My understanding is that the infrastructure is there, but there is a shortage of rolling stock to provide train services across the infrastructure. I do not know the details, but that is really the theme we are progressing with around electrification. Lines between Liverpool and Manchester are being electrified and you could run electric trains on those services very quickly, but there is a shortage of newer electric and diesel trains coming to the north to operate those services. That is where there would be a significant missed opportunity.

**Q215 Graham Stringer:** There has been £10 million or thereabouts of investment in the Todmorden curve. Do you know when there will be trains to run from Burnley to Manchester?

***David Brown***: I do not know precisely.

**Q216 Graham Stringer:** Could you send us a note on that?

***David Brown***: Yes. I can check with DFT colleagues.

**Q217 Graham Stringer:** On the bigger issue, does the cascade of trains through the system, together with the increase in the number of passengers, mean that we will still be using Pacer trains in another 15 or 20 years?

***David Brown***: The ITT for Northern and TransPennine is not written yet; it is due to be completed by December. Through Rail North, we are hoping to influence that. We are clearly saying that future franchises for both TransPennine and Northern have to have adequate provision, in both the number and the quality of trains, to meet growing demand. I am conscious that, if you replace Pacers with anything else, the costs will go up because of the rolling stock market, but my view—and Rail North's view—is that you have to find a way to provide improvement to the quality and quantity of rolling stock, otherwise you will be operating Pacer trains for the duration of the next franchise.

**Q218 Graham Stringer:** What response are you getting to that from Government? There must be informal talks going on. Are they saying, "Yes, we will find a way so that Pacers are taken off the system"?

***David Brown***: The public statements have been that they will ask for prices for replacement and renewal of rolling stock from bidders for the future franchises.

**Q219 Graham Stringer:** What about electric trains to run on the new electrified routes? Are they in the system? Do you know whether or not they exist?

***David Brown***: My understanding is that they are in the overall system, but it is reliant on a cascade from Thameslink. That has to happen. Our view as local authorities in the north is that having adequate electric trains—or, indeed, bigger diesel trains—is absolutely essential to unlock economic growth, and that constantly being at the end of a cascade to take trains that are fairly old from elsewhere into the north is not the best way of making the most of electrification.

**Q220 Graham Stringer:** It is absolutely not. It is somewhat of an insult to the whole of the north of England that we get London's cast-offs. Have you put anything into the bids or the discussions with Government to say that we ought to have our own new trains and not using trains that are two generations old?

***David Brown***: In our proposition to Government last year, we were very clear that the future franchises should include improved quality and quantity of rolling stock. Discussions with the Department are ongoing. The specification is due to be completed by December, so we are pressing very clearly that the north requires a very clear answer on what the proposition is for rolling stock in the north.

**Q221 Graham Stringer:** What estimate has been made of the total amount of new capacity in trains, both to run trains on the extra capacity given by the northern hub and the Todmorden link and to provide electric trains? What is the total amount of extra capacity in terms of train units, and what percentage of that increased capacity do you estimate will be new trains?

***David Brown***: To meet the demand that will occur over the franchise, if you do nothing, it is probably 220 additional carriages. To provide the additional services that we, with local authority colleagues, would like to see across the north—improving connectivity and running more services to make the most of the northern hub—it is probably 460 additional carriages. We have said that that is the number. The Government need to work with the franchise bidders on whether they are new trains and whether they are diesel or electric, but we have done quite a lot of robust work, which has been welcomed by the DFT, that shakes out the size of the challenge that needs to be met.

**Q222 Graham Stringer:** How is that going to be funded?

***David Brown***: That is the issue. Our key point is that you only get the real economic benefit of investment in the physical infrastructure—which is capitally funded, through Network Rail—if you run additional trains, bigger trains or electric trains on that infrastructure. You do not get the full economic benefit until you do that. To me, that seems to be the disconnect, in that there is no obvious funding line for that, because the franchising funding profile appears to be going down fairly significantly over the next period.

**Q223 Chair:** Who is responsible for making sure that the correct rolling stock is available?

***David Brown***: The specification comes from the DFT. It is then the bidder's responsibility to secure the rolling stock from rolling stock leasing companies for the duration of their franchise. That goes back to your colleague's questions about the time frames. There is quite a short period of time for a franchise bidder to secure investment in new rolling stock, in particular. Because there is no clear signal of the future requirement for better diesel trains, in particular, you end up locked into continuation of the existing fleet.

**Q224 Chair:** But if the system is not working, who is responsible for that? The points that Mr Stringer is making have been around the fact that for a long time we haven't seemed to see any improvement. Now, when we are having electrification, it is not clear that the appropriate rolling stock will be there. We look at the age of the rolling stock in the north compared with that in the south-east, and it is much older in the north. Who is responsible for changing that?

***David Brown***: The responsibility for that sits with the rail industry, working within the framework that is in place. We have done a lot of work that has said there might be a different model, where local authorities could take a longer-term view around rolling stock in the north, but at the moment it is part of national rolling stock structures. Rolling stock is owned and leased by rolling stock leasing companies to bidders against seven to nine-year franchises, and that makes it very difficult to secure a significant step increase in the quality of rolling stock in the north of England.

**Q225 Chair:** When you say the rail industry, what exactly do you mean? The rolling stock companies look to what benefits them. They are not looking at the overall needs of the traveller.

***David Brown***: The Department for Transport specifies what services are required. The bidders then have the obligation to secure those through the framework that is in place, which is rolling stock leasing companies, or by doing something else, but they have to do that and get a return within seven to nine years.

**Q226 Graham Stringer:** Do the trains actually exist? We know that there are trains that may come to the north from the Thameslink programme, but given the figures you have given us for the amount of increased rolling stock, is there that number of train units physically within the system?

***David Brown***: I do not know definitively, but no high quality diesel rolling stock, in particular, is being manufactured at the moment, whereas with electric trains, with the electrification programme, clearly manufacturers can see a future supply. You will all know of the issue relating to high quality diesel trains that are moving from TransPennine to Chiltern specifically for that. There is a limited pool of trains, which means that if bidders can offer longer-term contracts they are more likely to secure those trains.

**Q227 Graham Stringer:** What you are telling us about rail in the north is that you have no idea of how it will be funded and that even if a genie came along with x billion or hundreds of millions of pounds—whatever it was—and said, "That's for the new trains," they are not there. So we have neither the funding nor the trains.

***David Brown***: We have made it clear that we think there is an economic business case for trains—for those 460 vehicles—because that is the economic benefit.

**Q228 Graham Stringer:** But that is not quite the question I am asking. I am sure there is a business case; I and, I guess, most of this Committee agree with the business case. The question is, if the money is there, are there trains? You are telling us that there isn't the money and that, even if there was, there aren't the trains. That is deeply worrying for the strategy.

***David Brown***: There is no clarity yet from the Treasury on whether there is funding for these new trains. I am sure that will be fleshed out over the next three to six months. I have not seen the evidence to say that those trains exist within the system.

**Q229 Graham Stringer:** You may not be able to answer this, but it is an interesting and not totally rhetorical question. When the Secretary of State comes here, he says that he will guarantee that there is rolling stock on these routes for the electrified lines and the extra capacity that is being given to us because of the northern hub and other extra bits of track that are being put into the system. How do you think he can give that guarantee, given what you have just told us?

***David Brown***: You are right; I probably can't answer that question, but I agree that it is a very interesting question to ask.

**Q230 Chair:** Would you be surprised if he gave such a guarantee?

***David Brown***: I think we will know by December whether he is going to give that guarantee, because it will be in the franchise specification.

***Councillor Shaw***: Before the TransPennine franchise was awarded to First, the service was operated by 158 units. That is going back some 10 years or so, when the stock was quite old. We were very pleased when TransPennine was awarded to First and they brought in a brand-new fleet of 185 units as part of their franchise commitment, so we were a bit disappointed a few years ago when half of the fleet went to run the Scottish service and was replaced by 170s, which we are now being told are going to be taken back by Porterbrook Leasing because it is the end of the contractual term. The replacement we are being offered is 185 units—something that we had 15 years ago. When we challenged them and said, "Why is this happening?", we were told quite plainly by Nick Donovan from First TransPennine that there are not the number of units available for operators to use. I think I have just answered Mr Stringer's question. The equipment is not there. Nobody is investing in new equipment. As we electrify more and more of the network, there will be fewer and fewer diesel units available to be cascaded down to operators, without being really old, second-hand, antiquated equipment.

**Q231 Martin Vickers:** Following on from that to some extent, Councillor Shaw, while we have had problems in our area with different rolling stock and so on, it has nevertheless been the case that since TransPennine introduced the regular interval service and improved on the original rolling stock there has been a vast increase in patronage of the service. Tourism is of vital interest to Cleethorpes and north-east Lincolnshire. Could you give us some indication of how important tourism is and how you feel that the rail services have benefited it and could be improved to benefit it further?

***Councillor Shaw***: Yes. As far as tourism in north-east Lincolnshire is concerned, we have five economic strands to our regeneration policy. One of them is the visitor economy and tourism. Over the last few years, we have brought vast numbers of events into the area. Last weekend alone we had the national fish craft championships, which came to us from Cardiff. Next year we will have the international seafood congress based in northern Lincolnshire. It is important that we can get people in and out of the resort in a timely manner.

This year was the third year of our international air show. One of the big complaints was that people could not get a seat on a train and there was no spare capacity anywhere in the system to bring people in by rail. That caused major traffic problems on the M180, which were compounded by the problem that the Department for Transport decided that it would be a good time to dig up the motorway and close it for the weekend. It would seem that there was no connectivity there.

We are concerned that, as the stock gets older, people will vote with their feet and go elsewhere. If we end up without a direct service from other parts of the country through to northern Lincolnshire, we will see businesses in tourism close. We have done our best to stop that and to start increasing the tourism spend in the area—so much so that just this week we started work on our third new hotel, because we are getting more people coming to the area.

**Q232 Martin Vickers:** Could I go back to Mr Brown? We heard earlier from Councillors Redfern and Shaw about their concerns about the priorities of Rail North. Councillor Shaw gave us a list of local authorities that have some concerns about that. Can you tell me what you are doing to address those concerns?

***David Brown***: We got the letter on Friday, I think. Our intention is to set up a meeting with the authorities that have raised their concerns. The one thing everyone—all 30 local transport authorities—is absolutely in agreement on is that a top priority for the next franchising round is adequate capacity and quality of rolling stock. There is absolutely no dispute about that; it is a clear priority for all 30 local transport authorities. As Councillor Shaw has just highlighted, we all have examples where economic growth through either tourism or commuting is being capped because people cannot get on to trains. Despite concerns that have been expressed around consultation levels, I do not think there is any disagreement at all about having a clear picture about future rolling stock across the piece.

**Q233 Martin Vickers:** Would you agree that that rolling stock needs to be adequate? We have heard in the last few minutes about the shortage of rolling stock. Surely that should not be addressed by limiting existing services. As you know, there is great concern about the through service from Manchester airport to Cleethorpes. One of the proposals in the consultation document is to return to British Rail days and have a shuttle service to Doncaster, which would probably be as infrequent as it was in British Rail days. Can you give us an assurance that it is a Rail North priority that we retain the Cleethorpes-Manchester through services?

***David Brown***: What we have expressed is that we need proper connectivity to and from Manchester airport and to and from those cities. We have not got into the detail of individual services. Again, I think there is absolute agreement by all 30 local transport authorities that the franchising process for the next set of franchises should grow and invest in rail services in the north and enhance successful services that are in place, not just move things around and reduce costs to reduce the subsidy levels. We believe now is the time to invest in those rail services and make those connections, within communities and between cities and towns and the two major airports. There is absolute agreement by all 30 local transport authorities that the funding should be found to invest in those rail services.

**Q234 Martin Vickers:** That did not sound like a cast-iron guarantee that you are in favour of retaining the Cleethorpes to Manchester through services.

***David Brown***: No, because we have not referenced individual services. We have not referenced it. We have encouraged all our 30 local transport partners to respond to the consultation and express their views, which I know you and others have done.

**Q235 Chair:** But what would you be putting forward? There are a lot of people expressing views, but if direct services are being threatened surely you as the organisation as a whole would have a view on that. The Cleethorpes-Manchester airport service has been mentioned. Liverpool-Norwich is another service that is now apparently at risk. Surely you have a view on that.

***David Brown***: I am not sure that Liverpool-Norwich is a question in the consultation, as part of the text about whether that should be terminated at Nottingham. On the Cleethorpes example, Rail North per se did not respond to that consultation, but most of the authorities said, "If this is a successful service and provides a connection to Manchester airport, it should be retained."

***Councillor Redfern***: We cannot afford to have a lesser service or even the status quo. As I mentioned earlier, it is about business confidence. We cannot afford business interests to stall, because that would be absolutely catastrophic. Dr Kelly mentioned renaissance elsewhere. We have never had a renaissance—this is the first time ever. We are on the cusp of real interest and business, to give us the wealth that we need in the Humber region.

**Q236 Jim Dobbin:** I would be interested in comments on future investment and comparative investment in rail freight, as opposed to passenger transport, taking into consideration the port linkages.

***Dr Lamonte***: One North has absolutely included the freight side of life, because it seems to have played second fiddle to passenger services for so long. If we are going to see an increase in freight through Liverpool SuperPort—and, indeed, through Hull and elsewhere, with the growth of Immingham—it has to be given priority, particularly in the trans-Pennine links, because at the moment it is, frankly, just not considered. We need dedicated rail freight facilities, certainly at Liverpool SuperPort and elsewhere, and freight paths so that we can get the freight through. Then we can take some of the load off the ports in the south-east, which would have a lot of benefits. There is detail to follow, but that is absolutely part of the agenda.

**Q237 Chloe Smith:** I would like to come back on the point about east-west rail. Some of your own proposals in the One North plan are, by their nature, a bit east-west. I say "a bit" because I represent Norwich, which is the real east. Over there we hold very strong views, of course, on the piece that has just been mentioned—the chopping of the service at Nottingham. Would you care to give me your thoughts in more detail on that and, more broadly, on the need for full east-west links in this country? We can focus all we like on north-south—and, in some of your proposals, intra-north, if I dare call it that—but you might like to comment on the broader requirements of the country as well.

***Dr Lamonte***: Broadly, the remit that we had was to look at Liverpool-Hull and up to Newcastle. What became clear from the early work were the economic benefits of looking east-west in what we are doing. We have not looked further than that, and in the two months that we had, it would have been unrealistic, but certainly the east-west linkages have been poor and could be a lot better. We are offering some proposals on how we do that. We have not looked further south and east than that, but that is the sort of conclusion we have got so far.

***Councillor Shaw***: I find that quite an interesting statement: "We have looked at Liverpool-Hull and the Tees." Last week the announcement was made that the largest port in the UK by tonnage is Immingham, but it was not even mentioned by our rail colleagues in the north. They have also not looked at specific services. In the Rail North document, there is a commitment to authorities that there will be no detriment to our areas; that is a Rail North commitment in the proposal that it is putting forward. Detrimental proposals have been made about our services because of what is happening in the consultation, yet we hear that Rail North has not responded to the consultation on those services. That causes me as a local authority leader a bit of concern about Rail North.

If we are looking at port linkage, the majority of port linkages east to west go from Immingham to Liverpool and not from Hull to Liverpool. Hull is very much a port that does containerised traffic—Hull to Southampton, that way; we do freight the other way. Most of the cars that are built in this country are exported through Grimsby, yet none of them arrives in Grimsby from places like Derby and elsewhere by rail; the majority come by road. Surely if you are building cars for export and are exporting them through one port, you want to make sure that you get as much traffic as possible off the roads and on to rail. I really think that in these proposals we are not looking at the ports we should be looking at; we are looking at the older, traditional names for ports.

**Q238 Chair:** How does Rail North take its decisions? There seems to be a little problem that maybe it is based on the main cities, and other areas feel they are being left out. Perhaps other areas do not know what is being discussed. Who is actually responsible for what Rail North puts forward?

***David Brown***: First, Rail North is not looking at freight; it is looking purely at the Northern and TransPennine franchises. It is not looking at services outside those two franchises at this point. At the moment, Rail North per se is an informal arrangement between the 30 local transport authorities in the north of England. There is a proposition that has gone to all 30 local transport authorities to formalise that governance structure, which would be the creation of an association of local transport authorities covering all 30 and then the creation of a special purpose vehicle called Rail North, which would have a political decision-making process, with 11 leaders representing the 30 local transport authorities. That is an attempt to formalise what has been an informal arrangement since it started in—

**Q239 Chair:** At the moment it is informal.

***David Brown***: Yes, it is. That is why—

**Q240 Chair:** But it will be formal.

***David Brown***: Yes. The idea is that that governance has been put to all 30 local transport authorities, with the intention of ironing out any outstanding issues that people have, and an opportunity then to move to a more formalised governance arrangement, where decision making at both political and officer level is much clearer. That is an attempt to address some of the concerns.

**Q241 Chair:** Is it really devolution? This is put forward as devolution, but we are told that the Minister will be taking final decisions.

***David Brown***: Yes. The current arrangement, as discussed with the Department for Transport, is that this procurement will be done by the Secretary of State. We are trying to influence the specification, but that will be done by the Secretary of State. There is an outline partnership agreement with the Department for Transport that, over the period of the franchise, and subject to all of the Rail North partners' understanding and agreement, is looking at taking greater levels of decision making, and potentially risk and reward sharing, with an intention, or a potential intention, for Rail North to become the procuring body for the subsequent franchises. It is a staged devolution.

**Q242 Chair:** Staged devolution? I am not clear about exactly what that means. One suggestion in the consultation is about trade-offs and increasing fares to get supposed improvements. Where has that come from? Is that your idea? Is it Government's idea? There are to be new restrictions—I think they have already happened—on off-peak fares on Northern Rail, apparently at the request of the Department for Transport. Is that correct? If so, it does not say much about devolution.

***David Brown***: Your latter point about evening peak restrictions was a negotiation the Department for Transport did with Northern, as part of the direct award extension of their existing arrangements. That was done by the Department for Transport and I think it is being implemented in various parts of the north at the moment, but that was a direct negotiation extending the existing franchise arrangements.

The consultation document contains a number of questions for people to answer. Again, Rail North have been very clear, and other people such as Passenger Focus have been very clear, that the value for money people feel that they get from Northern, in particular, at the moment is very low compared with others, and that you would therefore need to see improvements to service frequency, service quality, rolling stock quality and so on before you could consider any increase to fares. You cannot expect people to pay more for a deteriorating level of service, which is why Rail North has consistently pressed for service improvements and service frequency improvements as part of the next franchise round.

**Q243 Chair:** Does Rail North support trade-offs? Does it support fares being increased, for example?

***David Brown***: It is not necessarily about fares being increased; it is about people paying the right level of value for money. Currently people do not believe that they get value for money for the fare that they pay. We believe, therefore, that the service quality should improve. If you can increase the fares to grow additional revenues, you would expect to be able to do that, but not prior to any service frequency or service enhancements.

**Q244 Chair:** Under the current agreement you have, could the Department enforce changes like that? Could it enforce fare increases?

***David Brown***: Yes.

**Q245 Chair:** The answer is yes?

***David Brown***: Yes. At the moment, the PTEs only are co-signatories to the Northern franchise, which means that we are a super-consultee, if you like. In essence, those fare changes can be negotiated, as you saw with the direct award. At the moment, local transport authorities outside those PT areas have no say at all, whereas under the Rail North model they would at least be involved in the decision-making process.

***Dr Kelly***: In the very difficult circumstances and the struggles that you have, in terms of trying to get a quart into a pint pot, I am mindful of the dangers of trade-off rather than doing the right things for the right areas. We have a couple of opinion formers—delicate, sensitive souls such as Lord Prescott and Austin Mitchell, who are probably feeling quite hurt at the moment—who have advocated the E20 corridor, the north of England and that activity for a generation now. That seems to have gone off the radar a bit, and we are hoping that you will put it back on.

The genuine argument that we have is that our time is coming in terms of a genuine opportunity and we would not like trade-offs to be done, because of the limitation of resources, between big and powerful cities at the expense of achieving that bigger opportunity right across the north because currently, perhaps, we are not as plugged in as we should be—we will try harder—in terms of the opportunities that we have. To miss them for the sake of political trade-offs because of the difficulties that you face would be a huge shame for our part of the world.

**Q246 Chair:** Is there a concern outside the major cities that some areas will be disadvantaged if this goes ahead?

***Dr Kelly***: That is essentially what I am saying. We have been quite good, particularly on the north bank, with Alan Johnson, for example, and John Prescott on Hull Trains—and, indeed, with Martin Vickers, Andrew Percy and the other two south bank MPs on bridge tolls—but there is a difference between one-off reactions and being locked into the process on a regularised negotiation to ensure that the right thing is done for our area. We do feel a Cinderella in that respect. That is perhaps because in recent times Hull has been underpowered. The south bank, in particular, has an unusually unique selling point, as Chris highlighted, with offshore renewables and maintenance—ahead of Hull at the moment. But it is a special opportunity and we would not like that to be missed, downgraded or lost because of your difficulties and the tough negotiations that you have with powerful forces, in the way they are constituted for the current process of negotiation—if that makes sense.

**Q247 Chair:** Mr Brown, you spoke about the current arrangements being informal and then moving on to a more formal structure. Will you be able to take account of the concerns that have just been expressed that areas outside the major cities clearly feel that they may be disadvantaged?

***David Brown***: Yes. I am absolutely certain that the governance arrangements that we have proposed over the last two months to the local transport authorities address that, in the fact that there will be 11 leaders, representing the sub-regions. They would all have one vote each. The Greater Manchester representative would get one vote, the representative from the Liverpool city-region would get one vote and the representative from the Humber area would get one vote. In a perverse way, areas representing a small percentage would get the same vote as someone representing a bigger percentage, but that is the model being proposed. I am convinced that, once we have worked through the local issues, we will be able to move on with it.

**Q248 Graham Stringer:** What is your worst fear in this? We have talked in general terms about process and consultation. How will I know when I look at the final franchise whether you have been done down or whether you have been successful in achieving what you want?

***Dr Kelly***: I certainly think the evidence under discussion today is that if we actually go backwards and lose a direct rail link to Manchester airport—

**Q249 Graham Stringer:** The Cleethorpes link.

***Dr Kelly***: To Cleethorpes—

**Q250 Graham Stringer:** That is the key issue?

***Dr Kelly***: That would be the classic example of an area going backwards, not forwards.

**Q251 Graham Stringer:** Is that the key issue?

***Dr Kelly***: That is absolutely essential to us.

**Q252 Chair:** Councillor Redfern?

***Councillor Redfern***: I just want to take you up on that. It was based on passenger numbers—

**Q253 Chair:** Councillor Redfern, would you address the Chair?

***Councillor Redfern***: I beg your pardon. It was based on passenger numbers, which is very unfair to the south Humber region. If I get one vote, that includes East Riding, Hull, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire, so the voting process will certainly be against us. I shall be totally against trade-off as such for the south Humber bank.

**Q254 Martin Vickers:** Mr Brown, like Councillor Shaw, I am somewhat staggered that you say that Rail North did not reply to the consultation document, yet, as it says on your website, your aim is to improve connectivity within the north and to other parts of the country. You have a major consultation document from the Department for Transport about two of the major franchises in your area. What was your logic in not responding to that?

***David Brown***: Rail North is not a formalised body in any way and therefore has no locus to respond on behalf of its 30 members. We took the view that the local flavour would come out better if all 30 local transport authorities, together with their partners in the private and public sector, responded, voicing those issues. We certainly circulated the Liverpool city-region response around other local transport authority members, as a basis for pan-Rail North issues that they might wish to put across.

**Q255 Martin Vickers:** How have you reconciled the different views within the local authorities? As I understand it, you are supposed to speak with the DFT; you are the voice of the north as regards rail issues of concern. That is the aim, as I understand it.

***David Brown***: That is why we are trying to put in place formal governance structures that allow us to have proper decision-making processes so that we are able to take that role, but the basis for the consultation is about getting local issues out—allowing individual local authorities and others to get those points out. We are also conscious that we do not want to put in one response on behalf of 30 local transport authorities when there will be specific local issues that they may wish to raise.

**Q256 Martin Vickers:** You will be aware that it is not just some of the local authorities that are concerned about the governance issues and so on; it is also the RMT, for example, who we had an informal session with before the recess. They have a whole range of concerns about the influence and role of Rail North. How do you intend to resolve those issues?

***David Brown***: Councillor James Lewis, Sir Richard Leese and I met Mick Cash and two of his colleagues several weeks ago to explain our role and why Rail North is looking for an investment-led railway that is about growth, improved levels of service and improved rolling stock. We explained our role and we accepted that they had concerns that their members had raised. We met senior representatives of the RMT several weeks ago; it must have been in July.

***Councillor Shaw***: To come back to east-west connectivity, the south bank of the Humber has always had an east-west connection, right back to the 1980s. Even under British Rail we had the Cleethorpes-Liverpool service. That was replaced by the Manchester airport service when Manchester airport came on stream with its own station. That is why we feel it would be a very backward step. We would be going back to pre-1980 days—a time when the area was in decline. Now the area is not in decline; as Councillor Redfern said, we are seeing a renaissance in employment, growth, skills and investment. That is why it is important that we keep and improve the service.

As far as Rail North is concerned, officers from Rail North do meet the DFT, but it tends to be officers from the core cities and PTEs who meet DFT officers. Because they have signed a confidentiality clause, they cannot tell the smaller authorities what they are discussing, which gives a two-tier level of involvement. It is a case of those who are in the know and those who do not get to know. That is where we think it is wrong.

**Q257 Chair:** Is that correct? Is there a confidentiality clause that prevents you from consulting authorities?

***David Brown***: There is, covering a significant part of the specification development discussion with bidders, but we have a mechanism in place to try to keep people updated within the terms of that agreement. That is one of the constraints that we have in working as part of the franchising process.

**Q258 Chair:** Electrification is very important, but we understand that the final costs of northern electrification have not yet been determined. Are you satisfied that the plans will go ahead as anticipated? Who would like to answer that one? We spoke to Department for Transport officials very recently about the issue, and they explained the process on costings for electrification. We questioned them on electrification in the north and they said that the final costs were not yet known, so there did not seem to be an absolute guarantee that planned programmes would go ahead. Are you aware of any issues around that?

***Dr Lamonte***: I am aware of some of the issues that Network Rail has in costing its programme. I do not have any specific information on electrification. We very much welcome the electrification task force as an opportunity to do more electrification. There are a number of areas across the north where we think that further electrification would be extremely helpful. We tried to develop that in the One North proposition. While I am afraid I cannot answer you on the specific point about the current programme—

**Q259 Chair:** This is about the current programme. You are not aware of any issues on that.

***Dr Lamonte***: I cannot answer you on that.

**Q260 Chair:** Mr Brown, are you aware of any concerns about that?

***David Brown***: I am not involved in the discussion about the infrastructure. The issue that I was trying to get across before was the revenue cost of the trains to run under the electric wires. I am definitely unsure about where that funding comes from.

**Q261 Chair:** It is still a question.

***David Brown***: Absolutely.

**Q262 Chair:** Do the plans include reopening the Skipton to Colne line? Dr Lamonte, is that in your plans?

***Dr Lamonte***: We do not have a specific proposition around that, although I am well aware that there is a strong body from that area that wants to look at it. I got that this afternoon, about 23 minutes before I came in here, so you will forgive me if I have not looked at it very carefully yet, but I am aware of the proposition.

**Q263 Chair:** It will be considered, will it?

***Dr Lamonte***: Absolutely.

**Q264 Chair:** But it has not been until now.

***Dr Lamonte***: No.

**Q265 Chair:** A number of you have mentioned the importance of ports. Do you think that transport links to your ports are being given sufficient priority?

***Councillor Redfern***: No, I do not. We have Immingham, which is one of the deepest-water ports in the country. It is vital for large ships coming in, as well as for supporting renewable offshore, with the large vehicles that will have to service offshore and renewable energy. I do not think we have been given the significance in terms of how vital that is. Then there is the future biomass that we will have coming through the port, increasing volume. We are looking at the gauge, which is not wide enough. We know the issues now. We are in 2014. We have to look to the future—the next 10 or 15 years. To keep looking back just at passenger numbers is not the right emphasis.

With respect, if I could just mention the confidentiality clause Councillor Shaw spoke about, a real disadvantage when I go to meetings is that I do not see some of the reports until I get there. Therefore it is not collective and, to be quite frank, not fair on everybody in the northern region.

***Councillor Shaw***: At the moment we are seeing 60 train movements each way per day out of Immingham. The first junction a train meets when it comes out of Immingham docks is Barnetby, which is a lovely station but is still operated by semaphore signalling, which is not the most up to date and modern way of signalling a modern railway. We also have ABLE, which will hopefully be announced as coming on stream—another major deep-water area. I have no doubt that it will bring more freight out of the area.

We have not got the capacity on the lines coming out of the south Humber area to cope with future demand. We have the line via Scunthorpe, which leads to Doncaster, but we also have the line via Brigg, which has been singled. When we lost the Scunthorpe connection because of the Hatfield slip, we could not run enough trains out of the area, because the lines that we had left were not capable of doing it. We need to see lines that have been singled go back to being doubled in order to cope with both the freight levels and the passenger levels that we have, but it seems to have dropped out of the loop, because it does not come under Rail North; it goes into the east midlands. We need to look at the best way of routeing the freight coming out of Immingham docks and having the capacity to do that.

**Q266 Jason McCartney:** Apologies for being late—I was at the Prime Minister's statement on Iraq, having served there while I was in the Royal Air Force. I came down to London this morning on East Coast. I live just outside Huddersfield and went from Wakefield. Again, I had a pretty poor experience. Loads of Hull trains had been cancelled this morning, so the East Coast service was incredibly packed. When I came down last Tuesday, it was the day after the closure of the line because of overhead power cables between Peterborough and London. Could I ask the panel what their experiences of rail services have been today and in recent weeks? I guess that you probably came by rail today. This is what it is all about—the passenger experience. Yet again I have had a poor passenger experience today, as I had last week.

***David Brown***: I travelled down by Virgin Trains from Liverpool this morning. It was very busy, to the point of overcrowding, and I think that was because London Midland trains were cancelled. My personal view is that I did not get value for money on my journey.

***Dr Lamonte***: I came down by Virgin from Manchester. Today it worked just fine. Last week it was an hour's delay on a two-hour journey.

***Dr Kelly***: I was planning to come down directly, through Hull Trains, from Howden to London. Unfortunately, Howden through to Selby is not operating because there are refurbishments going on, so we were directed to go to Goole. I went to Goole, but there had been problems on the Hull train getting up to Goole, so I was on a coach from Goole to Doncaster, where I met my colleagues. We have travelled in well ever since.

At a serious level, in terms of the Hull experience it is about being able to say to people in London, "Come up to Hull. You can get a train seven times a day, there and back. Explore what we have to offer—the city of culture and all the rest of it." It is similar in terms of Manchester. If a dozen senior chief executives of big multinational companies from Denmark are coming in via Manchester airport—there is a service through Leeds Bradford, but not necessarily on the right days—and we have to try to get them from Manchester to Cleethorpes via Sheffield or Doncaster, on and off trolley-bucket trains, how the hell are we supposed to persuade them—if you will excuse me, Madam Chair—to come and invest many millions and tens of millions of pounds in the place to come to explore the £100 billion offshore renewable opportunities we have, thanks to other Government Departments sorting out their issues with energy, strike prices and all the rest of it? One impacts on the other. We need that solution.

**Q267 Jason McCartney:** Do you have other recent experiences?

***Councillor Redfern***: Sure. This morning I got a seat. Three weeks ago I went from Scunthorpe to Manchester and it was standing. It is pretty catastrophic.

***Councillor Shaw***: We came on Grand Central today. It is the first time I have been on one of their trains, I must admit. Having said that, three months ago we came to London on East Coast, we had booked our seats, but we got there only to be told that our seats were not available. There was standing room only on the train, so we ended up in first class. We had a meeting with Mr Pickles, so we thought it was important that we got here. We got down as far as Peterborough and were turfed off the train, because we were told that it could not go any further south—it could only go north. Three trains later, we ended up on a train that was even more packed, so it was a really bad experience.

Some friends of mine went on holiday last year. For the first time, we persuaded them to go by rail. I do not think they will go by rail again because it was a case of "Welcome to the sardine express" going to Cleethorpes. That is the nickname that some of our trains get.

**Q268 Jason McCartney:** Chair, this is a microcosm. I support devolving decision making, but having been through the tunnels of Crossrail while serving on this Committee and having seen the huge amount of investment that is going on in London, I think that the advantage it has is TfL—one voice, one figurehead. Would you support my idea and the idea of many other people of having some kind of TfN, a Transport for the North, or, as a Yorkshireman, a TfY, a Transport for Yorkshire, with one figurehead that can bang the drum for us so that we as passengers—forget what we do as jobs and our positions—can have a decent experience? Any feedback on that?

***Councillor Shaw***: I would agree with that, provided that it is one voice for the whole area and not one voice for the five core cities only—and then there are the rest of them. If it is a case of my residents travelling in open cattle-trucks to fund the core cities having palatial first-class trains, I do not think that is a way forward. I may have a different opinion tonight when I travel back home via Sheffield—being a Yorkshireman myself, even though I am the leader of North East Lincolnshire at the moment—on East Midlands Trains to meet my wife, but I very much doubt it.

**Q269 Jason McCartney:** Would anyone else like to comment on that point about a TfY or a TfN?

***David Brown***: The whole purpose of Rail North is to devolve down decision making on future franchise requirements to a pan-northern level. If you put the localised governance issues to one side, local transport authorities are better equipped to make those decisions at a local level, to support economic growth through rail services.

**Martin Vickers:** I was going to end proceedings on a lighter note by saying that the port of Grimsby and the resort of Cleethorpes were created, in effect, by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, which was affectionately known as "mucky, slow and late," but 150-odd years later it would be a tragedy if we could not say that we could travel from Cleethorpes to Manchester on a direct train.

**Chair:** That is a very good point to end on. Thank you very much everybody.