



Department
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State
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Dear Ruth,

Northern Powerhouse Rail

The government is launching a major Northern Growth Strategy to unlock the economic potential of the region, working with local leaders and businesses. This aims to unlock the potential of the northern growth corridor across the Pennines, boost the North-East economy, and catalyse growth in key sectors across the whole of the North.

Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is core to this plan, and today we are confirming up to £45 billion of funding for the delivery of NPR as a long-term programme over the coming decades. NPR will seek to create a turn up and go railway across the Northern Growth Corridor, improving connections between the key cities along the Corridor: Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield, and York, with regular services onward to Newcastle via Darlington and Durham; Hull; and Chester for North Wales connections. Connectivity benefits will therefore be felt across the North. Government's plans for NPR will also improve access to Manchester Airport as a key northern hub. It will further support major projects in mayors' Local Growth Plans, helping to catalyse broader regeneration and housing interventions around stations in key cities.

Alongside government's investments within cities to improve connectivity, NPR has the potential to fuel the economy of the Northern Growth Corridor and beyond with better intercity connections, which will make it easier for people to access jobs, education and opportunities, and for businesses to find the skills they need.

NPR will be delivered in three phases:

- The **first phase** will prioritise the quickest wins via upgrades to lines East of the Pennines for delivery in the 2030s, focusing on electrification and upgrades in the Leeds-Bradford, Leeds-Sheffield and Leeds-York corridors, including the stations.
- The **second phase**, west of the Pennines, will see major construction works in the 2030s and beyond. We will take forward a new route between Liverpool and Manchester as a predominantly new line, running via new stations at Manchester Airport and Warrington Bank Quay Low Level.
- For the **third phase**, we will look at better cross-Pennine links over and above the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) currently being delivered. We see both Manchester to Bradford and Manchester to Sheffield as being key parts of this overall programme.

Integral to the way we will take forward NPR is the principle of close collaborative working with local leaders. Delivery Boards, including the Liverpool-Manchester Rail Board and the White Rose Partnership, attended by Mayors and Ministers will be used to embed joint working and support decision making and effective delivery. This will be complemented by, and integrate with, Tom Riordan's work as Northern Growth Envoy to reach decisions on intended delivery plans at the next Spending Review.

In order to facilitate the second phase of the NPR scheme, we will resume work on the High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill (the 'Bill'), which has been carried over from the last Parliament, to seek powers for the section of route into Manchester via Manchester Airport, which will also include a new station at Manchester Piccadilly. As you may know, last Parliament a special Select Committee was established to hear petitions from people and organisations who are specially and directly affected by the Bill. New members of this committee will be appointed, and they will start to hear outstanding petitions in due course. In parallel, we will bring forward development work for the connection to Liverpool via Warrington. The detailed route to Liverpool will be subject to future consultation.

Beyond improving connections between our northern cities, the government wishes to safeguard Britain's future growth for the long term by ensuring that the West Coast Main Line (WCML) corridor, which

serves six of our 10 biggest cities, offers sufficient capacity (in terms of both train paths and seat numbers) and good connectivity (in terms of reliability, journey times, and frequency). This is key to supporting and enhancing the benefits of NPR, and for delivering on this Government's broader growth ambitions across the North and beyond. In order to achieve this, the Government is therefore also setting out its intention to ultimately deliver a full north-south new line between Birmingham and Manchester, which can also support capacity for wider North-West and Scotland connections. The future use of the NPR line for London and Birmingham services is therefore an integral part of the strategic objectives for NPR overall, building on and enhancing the benefits and connectivity that the proposed Liverpool to Manchester route will provide. This has been a key factor in deciding to proceed with the Liverpool-Manchester route via Manchester Airport over potentially cheaper alternatives.

However, this is not a reinstatement of HS2 and the Government is yet to determine exactly what will be delivered and to what specification. Given the lessons from the historic management of HS2, the government believes now is not the time to take these decisions on either the design standards or delivery schedule of such a route, and significant further work is required to develop plans before such decisions are made. We will launch a feasibility study, working with local partners on what will be delivered, when, and to what specifications.

Current expectations are that delivery timelines for these ambitions would follow completion of HS2 Phase 1 in the South/Midlands and NPR in the North, implying delivery in the 2040s at the earliest. However, in the meantime, the Government is acting responsibly to safeguard the long-term future of the country and as such, while this work continues, the government's existing land holdings between the West Midlands and Crewe will be retained.

Alongside our work on NPR, the government will continue to work with local leaders to deliver on a coherent and comprehensive plan for the North, including an economic strategy for the northern growth corridor, the North East and the wider North to maximise more immediate economic opportunities. The government has appointed Tom Riordan – former Chief Executive of Leeds City Council – to be the Northern Growth Envoy and he will take forward a programme of work to deliver

on the government's economic strategy for the region over the next 18 months.

Further Information

If you have any further questions about the scheme, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Alexander', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT