

## **Written evidence submitted by Philip Davies MP (IRP0109)**

I write to formally offer my views to the Transport Select Committee Inquiry, in respect of the impacts of the Government's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), on Bradford. Having served as the MP for Shipley since 2005, I feel it is important that I ensure the views of my constituents are heard and considered, as part of this important consultation. I am extremely grateful to the Committee for looking into this.

The decision to scale back Northern Powerhouse Rail and, specifically, the new build lines from Liverpool to Leeds via Manchester and Bradford, is a huge disappointment in the North generally and the Bradford district in particular. These new lines represented a huge chance for the government to throw weight behind its commitment to 'level up' the North, by seeking to establish real parity between the quality and scale of transport infrastructure in London, and the rest of the country. Many of my constituents have spoken to me about their profound disappointment with the decision not to proceed with the project. It appears the government felt that the people of the Bradford district could be pacified with the news that the route between Leeds and Bradford would "be upgraded and electrified" – a gesture that represents comparatively small and insulting concession prize, in comparison to what was initially promised.

Many people in my constituency believe that the introduction of these new lines would represent a vital step towards securing the economic regeneration of our area – establishing modernised, frequent and reliable rail services that could propel the area's economic growth. Owing to the nature of the Integrated Rail Plan, these plans have now been almost entirely derailed.

Aside from the railway line itself, the eagerly awaited promise of a new train station for Bradford must be considered – something that also failed to materialise in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Transport simply should not be a decisive factor in compelling people to uproot themselves and move away from communities where they have grown up and are otherwise content. The Bradford district is a great place to work, study and live, with a huge amount of untapped potential – but with a lack of meaningful investment. With the right support in place, this potential could be

unlocked – helping not only to ‘level up’ outcomes for local communities, but also generating significant economic capital for the country in its entirety.

The existing Forster Square Station is insufficient to adequately meet demand in the area – a new station in central Bradford which crucially would allow through services, represented a vital piece of the puzzle in showcasing the Government’s serious commitment to ‘levelling up’ Bradford, through the huge economic and social benefits that were likely to flow to the area as a direct result.

Transport for the North outlined that Northern Powerhouse Rail would enable the residents of Bradford to reach Manchester Airport within around 30 minutes, down from 1hour 40minutes at present. They also set out that the WYCA growth strategy for Bradford outlines that, through being connected to Northern Powerhouse Rail network could generate approximately £2.9bn in GVA uplift and bring over 27,000 additional jobs to Bradford by 2060. This serves to illustrate the very real benefits that could have been brought to the area, prior to the decision to abandon these plans in the Integrated Rail Plan.

It has been estimated that a new Northern Powerhouse Rail station in Bradford would have provided access to 1.3m additional jobs within 90 minutes of Bradford and secured £30bn value of city centre growth and investment.

Undoubtedly, the Integrated Rail Plan represents one of the largest funding packages made available for infrastructure investment in the North of the country. However, it has once again failed to adequately provide and deliver for the people of the Bradford district. I would therefore, in the strongest possible terms, urge for this decision to be reconsidered, including alternative sources of funding for the Northern Powerhouse Rail project and a new station for Bradford.

People in Leeds will always say that one of the main reasons they have been so successful economically in recent years is because of the wonderful transport links they enjoy making it easy to get to and from.

Bradford is one of the biggest cities in the country and is a sleeping giant. Transport infrastructure is key to unlocking that potential. Without it, it is difficult to see how Bradford will ever emerge from the shadow of Leeds, and I very much hope the Select Committee can persuade the government to think again, and reverse its measures which have been so badly received across the Bradford district.

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