

Written evidence submitted by 20 Miles More (IRP0074)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We at 20 Miles More have campaigned for a direct HS2 connection to the Liverpool City Region since 2013. We have pointed out the importance to our city and region of this link, which was omitted from Phase 2 of the project. From our earliest days, we have recognised the benefits of a northern rail link and have supported the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals.

Our reaction to the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan is both positive and negative. We now have an official scheme to connect Liverpool almost directly to the high-speed rail network and to the other cities of the North. On the other hand, the scheme has been cut back to the extent that capacity release and journey times fall well short of what we believe to be possible.

We support the IRP (with serious reservations) in as much as it serves the Liverpool City Region but strongly urge that aspects of it are stringently reviewed to achieve the most benefit from this once in a lifetime investment.

ABOUT 20 MILES MORE

20 Miles More is a campaign supported by a coalition of leading business figures and academics to extend the HS2 network to Liverpool. At present Liverpool is the only major city in the North and Midlands without a dedicated link or station on HS2. It is estimated that a link serving the city would increase the GVA of Liverpool and the UK by £15bn over 20 years.

Our campaign commenced in 2013 in response to the publication of the government's preferred route for Phase 2 of HS2. We participated in the consultation process. Since then, we have held meetings with representatives of HS2, the Department for Transport and Merseytravel as well as local MPs. We have submitted evidence to the Phase 2a and Crewe Hub consultations, the Oakervee Review and the National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence.

INTRODUCTION

We welcome this opportunity to respond to the Integrated Rail Plan Call for Evidence. The Integrated Rail Plan represents a major rethink of both Phase 2 of HS2 and of Northern Powerhouse Rail. It severely curtails the aspirations of both projects in terms of improved connectivity between the major cities of the UK. However, given that our area of interest is the Liverpool City Region, we will only comment on this issue to the extent that it affects our area.

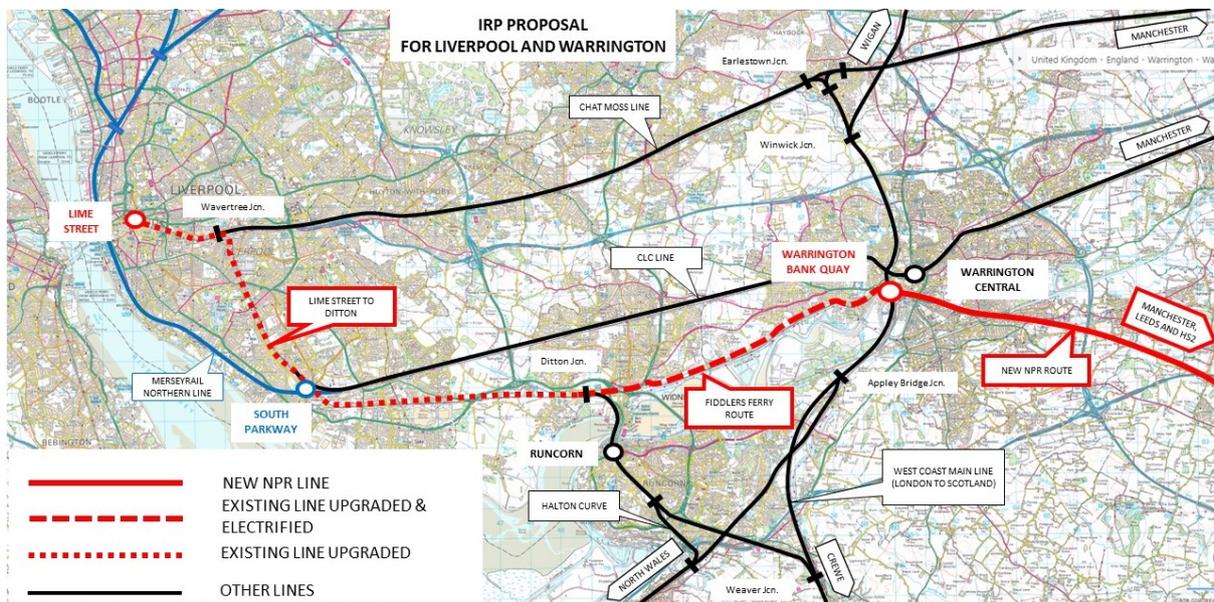
Whereas the Plan scales back the aspirations of the Liverpool City Region, we believe that there are several aspects that are positive, and which can be built upon to give the City Region the rail system that it needs to enhance both its own economy and that of the nation.

In the following text we comment both on the limitations of the Plan but also request clarification of elements in so much as they affect the Liverpool City Region.

The following headings are taken from the Transport Committee Call for Evidence.

THE CONTRIBUTION THAT THE IRP WILL MAKE TO RAIL CAPACITY AND CONNECTIVITY

The following diagram gives our interpretation of how the Integrated Rail Plan proposals will impact on the Liverpool City Region and Warrington. It is based on diagrams within the document:



The Phase Two HS2 scheme envisaged that the Liverpool City Region and Warrington would be served by classic lines from a junction with HS2 south of Crewe.

20MM believed that this proposal was wholly inadequate in that HS2 services would need to share tracks with local passenger and freight services on the congested section of the West Coast Main Line between Crewe and Weaver Junction. It would remove one of the principal advantages of HS2 by not freeing up capacity for new passenger and freight services. This would curtail the development of rail freight services from the expanding Port of Liverpool with both economic and environmental consequences.

The IRP proposal is, consequently, to be welcomed in that, by introducing a new section of route between the HS2 spine route at Tatton and Warrington, the congested section of the WCML will be by-passed, so releasing capacity on this section. In fact, a similar route was proposed in our response to the original Phase 2 consultation.

Our support for this new route is subject to the following:

- **Warrington to Ditton** The use of the existing freight route from Warrington to Ditton Junction raises the question of just how much investment will be available to bring this route up to HS2 standard. The current route, which served the now closed Fiddlers Ferry power station, has a curved alignment, several at-grade road crossings and proximity to the Mersey Estuary with consequent flooding risk. We believe that this line should be upgraded to the standards applying to both the Birmingham and Manchester branches of HS2.
- **Runcorn** The existing Liverpool to London rail service includes a stop at Runcorn. This serves a large catchment that includes the town itself, South Wirral and Widnes. How will this market be served now that this stop has been removed from the high-speed rail network? We suggest that the development of an interchange station at Ditton is studied with a view to acting as a parkway station for the adjacent A562 and a rail interchange for services from South Liverpool, South Wirral and North Wales via the Halton Curve.
- **Ditton to Central Liverpool** The existing route from Ditton Junction to Wavertee Junction is an intensively used mixed traffic route subject to speed restrictions which feeds into the capacity constrained Edge Hill Cutting and Liverpool Lime Street Station. In line with the aspirations of HS2, we would expect to see this existing route remodelled to maximise capacity and linespeed. We would also expect to see that, as a longer-term objective, a new route be planned into central Liverpool to a new HS2 / NPR station. Consequently, any

enabling works required to facilitate that new route should be incorporated into the remodelled existing route.

- **Liverpool Lime Street** Whilst the IRP envisages some redevelopment of Liverpool Lime Street station, there is no mention of how much additional platform capacity will be provided or whether the redeveloped station will be capable of serving 400m long HS2 trains. This has important consequences both for the number of individual trains that can serve Liverpool and overall passenger capacity.
- **London Journey Time** The overall journey time from Liverpool to London is given in the IRP document as 92 minutes. This compares to the 94 minutes of the HS2 Phase 2 proposal. We question why the proposed works result in such a low time advantage and urge that the achievement of a maximum 90 minute journey time be adopted as a project target.
- **London Capacity** In our response to the initial HS2 Phase 2 consultation, we identified that the proposed capacity of two 200m long trains per hour from Liverpool to London was likely to prove inadequate. Not only is it much lower than the three 400m long trains per hour to be provided from both Manchester and Leeds but, at peak times, it will hardly exceed the capacity to be provided under the current Avanti franchise.

Should it not be possible to accommodate 400m long trains at Liverpool Lime Street – as seems likely – then the only solution will be the provision of additional 200m long units, at least at peak times. Given the decision to curtail the Eastern Arm of HS2 so that services from Leeds, York and Newcastle will make use of the existing East Coast Main Line, there is an opportunity to provide additional trains on the HS2 Phase One route. This will depend on the retention of platform capacity at both Old Oak Common and London Euston. We urge that no decision is made to reduce platform or line capacity in line with the IRP proposals until future capacity requirements have been adequately assessed.

WHETHER AND HOW THE IRP WILL “LEVEL UP” COMMUNITIES IN THE MIDLANDS AND THE NORTH

The 'levelling up' agenda that both HS2 and NPR form a part of is normally understood to refer to the raising of economic activity and living standards in the North and Midlands of England to match those enjoyed in London and the South East. It is generally accepted that no single city can, by itself, match the economic might of the capital and so the agenda can only be met by improving the connectivity between the northern cities to allow agglomeration benefits such as access to larger labour and employment markets.

It is clear from the IRP that the aspiration of Northern Powerhouse Rail for reduced journey times between the Northern cities has not been met. For example, the planned journey time between Liverpool and Manchester will be 35 minutes when this time is already achieved on the existing route to Manchester Victoria. Similarly, the planned journey time for Liverpool to Leeds is 73 minutes. The document states that the present time is 106 minutes, but the current timetable includes one journey of 85 minutes.

We would expect that the investment in new infrastructure should allow a 30-minute journey time between Liverpool and Manchester and one hour between Liverpool and Leeds – as was envisaged in the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposal.

The decision to remove Bradford from the proposed Manchester to Leeds link will mean both extended journey times and a need to change for travellers from and to the west side of the Pennines. Again, this is a far cry from the Northern Powerhouse proposal.

There is no mention of the Liverpool to Birmingham service and so it is assumed that future travellers between the two cities will either continue using the current classic services or make a connection at Crewe or Birmingham Interchange. There seems no obvious reason why a through Liverpool to Birmingham via Warrington service cannot be introduced given the planned infrastructure and we urge that active consideration is given to providing this service.

It is essential for the success of the levelling up agenda that sufficient capacity is available to satisfy the increased demand arising from the new investment. This requires that constraints on capacity are addressed. Within the Liverpool City Region, the most evident capacity constraints are the existing lines from Ditton to Lime Street, which HS2 and NPR will share with current passenger and freight traffic together with platform capacity within Liverpool Lime Street. Whilst these constraints are acknowledged, the IRP does not give any detail of how they will be addressed. We strongly recommend that the aspirations of

the IRP are backed up by detailed proposals to demonstrate the feasibility of the plan.

HOW THE IRP WILL AFFECT RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES OUTSIDE THE MIDLANDS AND THE NORTH

As a general point, the provision of new high-speed infrastructure will free up train paths on the existing classic rail network for the introduction and enhancement of passenger and freight services. This benefit should accrue to many communities remote from the high-speed rail network although the IRP decision to curtail the Eastern Arm of HS2 will severely reduce the benefits to the eastern side of the country.

Given that 20MM is concerned with the impact of the IRP proposals on the Liverpool City Region, our main areas of interest are as follows:

- **North Wales** Current Merseyrail services terminate at Chester, and it is planned that future services will also serve Shotton. As both stations are on the North Wales main line, there is a potential for passengers from South Wirral and Halton to have an HS2 route to London and Birmingham that avoids the need to travel via central Liverpool.

We suggest due consideration is given to electrification of the North Wales Main Line to allow HS2 services to run via Chester and Crewe to London, the benefits to the Liverpool City Region being taken into account.

- **Scotland** We acknowledge the benefits accruing to Scotland of extending the HS2 route northward from its current proposed junction with the West Coast Main Line south of Wigan in terms of both journey time and capacity. However, our main interest is with the future of the Golborne Spur, which runs from the Manchester branch junction at Tatton to Bamfurlong Junction. We note that the IRP states that the future of this spur is subject to review.

Whilst we would not oppose the deletion of the Golborne Spur, should that prove to be justified, we are concerned that effective measures will be put in place to ensure that the resulting additional high-speed services on the West Coast Main Line do not recreate the congestion problems between Crewe and Weaver Junction that will be relieved by the new HS2 line to Warrington. We note the recommendation of the Union Connectivity Review that this stretch of route be upgraded to allow for additional traffic.

THE CHALLENGES TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS, REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES, TRANSPORT BODIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN DELIVERING THE IRP

The whole purpose of an Integrated Rail Plan is to deliver upgrades to the existing rail network in such a way that they dovetail with existing services and help to enhance those services. This will include access to the stations either by rail or road, coordination with local authority development plans and the development of new services, both passenger and freight, depending on capacity freed up by the new high-speed lines.

The challenge to central government is to deliver the project in its entirety and instil in stakeholders a confidence that the proposed infrastructure will be delivered to time and budget. It will require cross-party dialogue to ensure that a change in government will not derail the process. The major changes that the IRP makes to the HS2 project have rendered ineffective years of work by local authorities and local transport bodies, with consequent damage to public confidence.

Great British Railways will need to maximise the opportunity to replan the rail network both to coordinate with the new high-speed infrastructure but also to develop passenger and freight services on the existing network. We note that the Liverpool City Region has been subject to cutbacks in medium and long-distance passenger services over many years. We strongly urge that these services are restored and that new services are developed. There is also the opportunity to develop new freight flows from the Port of Liverpool, so reducing the demand on the road network and reducing CO2 emissions.

Local authorities and transport bodies will need to integrate the new high-speed railway into their development plans. For example, platform space at Liverpool Lime Street station can be freed up by diverting Merseyrail City Line services into Liverpool Central Station via the historic Wapping Tunnel. This is a project that has been planned since the 1970s and has many network benefits. The need to expand inter-city services from Lime Street makes the project that more important.

Prior to the publication of the IRP, the Liverpool City Region had established a commission to investigate a site within Liverpool City Centre for an HS2 / NPR station. The work undertaken by this commission needs to be reviewed and a decision made as to whether Lime Street will be the chosen site for a permanent station. This will influence city centre development plans. An HS2 /

NPR station is known to be a catalyst for office and residential development but uncertainty regarding the permanence of the Lime Street terminal will be a major drawback. A decision needs to be made as soon as possible and coordinated with other considerations such as the possible construction of a dedicated HS2 / NPR rail link from Ditton Junction into central Liverpool.

If Lime Street is chosen as the permanent high speed rail terminal for Liverpool, decisions on land use will need to be made to maximise the development potential of the surrounding area whilst respecting its historic value. These will need to be coordinated with local transport planning to facilitate car and public transport access.

HOW THE RAIL SCHEMES IN THE IRP WILL INTEGRATE AND INTERACT WITH HS2

In the case of the North-West, the principal addition will be a new section of track from the HS2 spine route at Tatton to Warrington Bank Quay Low Level Station. This is assumed to include stretches of existing disused railway and cross the Manchester Ship Canal by means of the existing Latchford Viaduct.

At Tatton, the new route will link by means of a system of grade-separated junctions to both the Manchester branch of HS2 and to the HS2 spine heading south toward Crewe and London. These junctions have already been planned as part of HS2 Phase 2b and have been incorporated as 'passive provision' for the future NPR scheme.

20 Miles More has previously pointed out that this arrangement considers NPR as a 'bolt-on extra' and strongly believe that a rationalisation of the scheme could introduce benefits such as cost reduction and reduced environmental impact. We question the wisdom of having to provide two high level crossings of the Manchester Ship Canal.

Notwithstanding the above, we recognise the benefits to the scheme of allowing Liverpool to Manchester NPR trains to share tracks from Tatton into central Manchester and the importance of a direct link from both Liverpool and Warrington to Manchester Airport.

The decision to curtail the Eastern Arm of HS2 will mean that Leeds to Birmingham services will need to travel via Manchester and we, therefore, question whether there will be sufficient capacity within the Piccadilly to Airport tunnel to provide these services plus Manchester to London / Birmingham and Leeds / Manchester to Liverpool services.

We are also concerned that the proposed reverse at Piccadilly Station for NPR services will severely limit capacity and recommend that this decision is reviewed to establish whether a through station would be more efficient.

Beyond Manchester, we request clarification of the proposal to terminate the new line at Marsden on the Yorkshire border. Will the new scheme involve the reopening of the two disused Standedge Tunnel bores and, if so, is that consistent with a 21st century high-capacity passenger railway? Clearly, extending the new track as far as Leeds City Station would allow journey time and capacity improvements and so this decision appears a false economy.

HOW THE RAIL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES IN THE IRP WERE SELECTED, AND WHETHER THOSE SELECTIONS REPRESENT EQUITY BETWEEN AND WITHIN REGIONS

As a Liverpool focussed organisation, the impact of the decision to severely curtail the Eastern Arm of HS2 is outside our area of concern. However, this clearly removes a large part of the justification for the entire scheme and is not in the interest of the project. The decision to enhance the East Coast Main Line for services from Leeds, York and Newcastle removes the principal benefit of a new line in releasing capacity on existing infrastructure. This calls into question whether the IRP has been overly influenced by the Treasury rather than the interests of the communities that it serves.

Given that the Phase One route from London to Birmingham is already well underway and, therefore, not affected by the IRP, the obvious principal beneficiary of the IRP will be Manchester, which will retain its HS2 Phase Two services whereas Leeds, York and Newcastle will lose theirs and Sheffield will be served by long stretches of classic route.

Liverpool is a beneficiary of the scheme in as much as it will now have dedicated infrastructure (at least as far as Ditton Junction), has government commitments to enhancements to Lime Street Station and its approach tracks and will enjoy enhanced capacity on the West Coast Main Line. However, in terms of passenger capacity and journey time to the capital will be a poor relation to Manchester. We consider that this is important as the two cities compete within the same region for both jobs and investment.

Should it be government policy, as has long been suspected, that Manchester is selected as a de-facto capital for the North of England and that the rail investment in that city reflects that role, this should be openly discussed, and

measures put in place to ensure that other cities within the North benefit from this arrangement.

WHETHER THE IRP REPRESENTS VALUE FOR MONEY FOR UK TAXPAYERS

Whilst we have identified benefits of the IRP, the reduction in the scope of both HS2 and NPR is clearly an exercise in cost saving rather than an improvement on the previous proposals. By curtailing the Phase 2b Eastern Arm, the cost : benefit ratio of Phase 1 will be reduced along with that of the massive works at Old Oak Common and London Euston. The upgrading of the East Coast Main Line will be expensive and disruptive and will not deliver the journey time improvements or capacity release of the Eastern Arm.

Northern Powerhouse Rail clearly does not achieve its ambitions. The cost savings of not extending as far as either Leeds or Liverpool, of avoiding Bradford and not constructing a through station at Manchester may well amount to a false economy.

The Liverpool City Region will benefit from the released capacity and the (small) reduction in journey times but the proposals, as they are, may well not amount to a long-term solution.

Given the high and rising cost of the project and the reduction in its scope, it probably does not represent the value for money of a costlier but more extensive alternative.

We recognise the need to save money in the post-Covid era and, though the project as amended by the IRP does not meet our aspirations or those of many other UK towns and cities, we still believe that it should go ahead on the understanding that some of the more severe cuts might be restored at a later date.

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