

Written evidence submitted by the Joint Rural Parishes Combined Campaign Group (IRP0075)

Introduction

The Joint Rural Parishes (JRP), which represents 17 rural communities to the west of Doncaster, (Barnburgh, Harlington, High Melton, Adwick on Dearne, Cadeby, Hickleton, Marr, Brodsworth, Pickburn, Green Lane, Hooton Pagnell, Clayton, Frickley, Moorhouse, Hampole, Skelbrooke and Sprotbrough) held a number of discussions & worked together to formulate a joint response to the Inquiry regarding the draft Integrated Rail Plan proposals which are now being considered by the Department of Transport. This submission should be considered a general overview which reflects the majority opinion of these communities.

The JRP would like to fully participate in the IRP Inquiry and consultation which is being carried out by the Transport Committee and we thank them in advance for the opportunity to respond. It is very much appreciated and this proactive approach has encouraged a belief that our views are important and that they will be given careful consideration.

The Combined Campaign Group are to submit more detailed evidenced feedback on the proposed IR Plans on our behalf and on behalf of our communities, all of which the JRP fully supports and endorses.

On behalf of the JRP and its residents, please find below our response to Key Issues of the proposals specifically regarding Economic Growth, Rail Capacity and Connectivity, 'Levelling Up', Value for Money and potential delivery Challenges.

Value for Money

It is difficult at this stage to determine if the proposed IR Plans are Value for Money. However, when comparing the cost of the IRP proposals against the current projected costs of the HS2 Eastern Leg, combined with the cost of Transport for the North's rail schemes, we advocate that billions of pounds saved to deliver similar services and journey time savings must be viewed as better Value for Money for the tax-payer.

You will be familiar with the growing costs associated with the entire HS2 Eastern Leg, costs which were still rising and which will only significantly increase since the route is yet to undergo detailed Geological and Topography assessment.

Unfortunately, one of the reasons for this is that HS2 Ltd have stated that the M18 Eastern route will not involve land with previous mining areas, stating '*...the path of the M18 route is an area not known for mining*'. This is simply not the case; it is well documented that Doncaster is renowned for its intensive coal mining legacy. The M18 route will traverse across areas that are honeycombed with shallow mining pits and subsidence is a major issue that persists today as a result of intensive coal mining. Since HS2 representatives then went on to state '*... There is a possibility the route will not go ahead due to underground conditions. Mining is the whole problem for the Yorkshire route...*', we maintain that the true costs of delivering the entire Eastern Leg are still unknown but are likely to increase significantly, an impact which will reduce the Benefits to Cost Ratio (BCR) even further.

Misleading Financial Projections submitted by HS2 Ltd regarding underestimating the total number of demolitions and costs for purchasing property, businesses and land acquisitions along the M18 route will only add financial penalty, further reducing the BCR.

In addition, none of the new rail schemes proposed by TfN deliver value for money. All options under review deliver extremely low BCR return of investment.

We advocate that other costs must be considered and weighed in the balance of delivery. Environmentally, HS2 Ltd initially considered and quickly discarded the M18 route early in the sifting/selection process in 2012 because of the massive negative impact it would have on the environment and which HS2 Ltd stated '*...could not be mitigated...*'

Simply put, the M18 Eastern Leg is not only environmentally damaging, but even after 100 years, it will not achieve a carbon neutral status. We maintain that the scheme flies in the face of Policies that both the Government and the Opposition seek to achieve in reducing Carbon Emissions and are contrary to becoming a shining example and world leader on Climate Emergency and Change.

The HS2 M18 Eastern Leg proposals are compounded by the fact that it does not follow The Kent Principle, since it does not follow existing motorway or transport routes. Instead, it crosses and disrupts major road transport routes, interacting with more settlements and contrary to the adherence to the Kent Principle throughout Phase 2.

We agree that spending good money after bad to deliver the M18 section of the Eastern Leg or the TfN rail scheme options is not reasonable, since neither delivers value for money.

However, we maintain that investment in rail infrastructure for the North is desperately required and it is imperative that ongoing future investment is secured if the North is to have any chance of achieving and delivering significant GDP growth and creating new employment opportunities.

In our very strong opinion, if the proposed IRP can be delivered in full, this is a better value for money alternative. The IRP proposes speedy investment, delivering more quickly on much needed upgrades in rail infrastructure, which in turn, will attract and facilitate inward investment and act as a catalyst to increase GDP and new jobs much more quickly.

Economic Growth and 'Levelling up' Communities

As stated previously, the IRP will deliver more quickly the much-needed transformative upgrades and changes to rail infrastructure across the North, and in doing so, it will drive growth in GDP and create new employment opportunities in a much timelier fashion. It is inclusive and does not by-pass communities, communities which could not have economically benefited from rail access and connectivity but would have been excluded by the other HS2/TfN rail scheme proposals.

This is surely a forward-thinking and a positive step to achieving Levelling Up. Connectivity is improved as well as accessibility. These are vital components if we are to encourage commuters to abandon their cars in preference to travel by rail.

In comparison, the same cannot be said for the HS2 M18 Eastern Leg or any of TfN's rail scheme options which cannot be delivered within similar time-frames - most especially as HS2 Ltd have yet to produce Economic Growth projections for the Midland Station option.

For the last 6 years we have consistently challenged HS2 Ltd on this issue and how it has established its BCR. In the absence of Economic Growth figures for Midland Station, it is our understanding that the Economic Growth projections for the Meadowhall route and Station option were substituted to generate a BCR. The resulting BCR is therefore incorrect and inflated, since it assumes a full HS2 Hub Station at Meadowhall with 5 to 6 full train services per hour, a 68 minute commutable journey time, inflated commuter numbers, connectivity and passengers travelling to and from Birmingham and Leeds to Sheffield – all of which will not be delivered by the Midland Station option.

It is illogical to assume that shared rail tracks, a maximum of 2 half- trains per hour with a now un-commutable 85 minute journey time to London, a Station which is inaccessible and has poor connectivity to the Region, can deliver an identical BCR to that proposed at Meadowhall.

Our concerns are based on well evidenced data regarding journey time dis-benefits, penalties incurred by an additional 17 minute journey time, reduced Demand and Passenger numbers due to poor connectivity to an inaccessible Station. We maintain that HS2 Ltd's National and Regional BCR figures remain inaccurate.

Additionally, from the outset, Northern Powerhouse set very clear objectives of what was needed to overcome the barriers if the North is to deliver GVA growth of £97bn and to create 850,000 additional new jobs by 2050. They declared that Conditional Outputs were needed to achieve this. For Rail the Conditional Outputs were 6 trains per hour from and to each of the three City Stations - Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester with 30 minute journey times between each station for all three locations.

Unfortunately, none of the Rail Schemes proposed by TfN overcame the barriers to deliver the Key Conditional Outputs that they stated were required in order that the North could deliver their Economic Growth projections.

We therefore challenge how TfN can continue to state that the same Economic Growth projections can be delivered when the barriers for delivery still remain. We maintain this reasoning is illogical, statistically unachievable and extremely misleading.

We ask the Committee in their deliberations to weigh up other considerations and impacts that include Economic Growth dis-benefits; No accurate value has been established yet for the loss of local farming and tourism or the value of the countryside that will be destroyed resulting from the HS2 M18 Eastern Leg. Mysteriously, this has been reduced from £4 billion to £1 billion in cost analysis even though the M18 route travels through larger swathes of Greenbelt, Agricultural land and open countryside; There are no costs included for the loss of 'tranquillity' or for the dis-benefits associated for loss of business, dust & dirt, impacts of road and major arterial trunk road closures, grid-locked roads and diversions, disruptions that will surely be incurred during the 10+year construction period and the negative impact this will have on local economies.

While Safeguarding remains in place, the M18 route section of the HS2 Eastern Leg is contrary to, and hinders delivery of, the Government's new house building targets and its Green Policies.

Similarly, the M18 route section impacts negatively on Doncaster's Local Plan by countermanding its much-needed strategic new homes and settlement objectives and its vision for a 'greener Doncaster' policy.

In order to deliver the full IRP, swift decisions will now need to be taken to establish and finalise the remaining sections of the rail routes which are still under review to complete connectivity. In doing so, land which is Safeguarded can be removed to deliver new housing and promote economic growth which currently is prohibited.

In comparison, by upgrading existing rail routes, the IRP is likely to generate minimal impact on Economic Growth dis-benefits. We consider this to be a positive advantage of the IRP over the other Rail scheme proposals. Avoiding any disruption to current Economic Growth levels will be vital over the next few years, enhanced by a speedy removal of Safeguarding.

Rail Capacity, Connectivity and Accessibility

In our very strong view, the HS2 Eastern Leg and TfN rail schemes did little to enhance accessibility. Proposing poor access to stations and high-speed services, especially where HS2 used existing rail lines, did not free up capacity but instead displaced current accessible commuter stopping services for trains

which did not stop. South Yorkshire would have been poorly served, all but excluding its 1.7 million people from high-speed services.

Further, we have always challenged where the Demand for 18 trains per hour, 9 in each direction, can be fulfilled by commuters. Stopping at very few stations, we continue to challenge – how 1000 seats per train were to be filled with paying passengers?

The IRP means that more people will have access to rail services including High Speed trains from Towns and not just Cities across the region and between regions, a real improvement in Public Transport for the benefit of and available to, the many not just the few. A joined-up and integrated rail plan with reliable services, with greater Connectivity, more convenient and user friendly – no having to change at stations, together with improved access, is more attractive for commuters, promoting growth in passenger numbers and improving the BCR.

The IRP proposes a wider spread of positive gear changes to deliver an effective and efficient rail transport systems to make it easier for people to not only seek employment but to gain higher salaried employment from a wider choice of accessible locations around the North.

For the 25 million people and 1 million private sector businesses in the North, the IRP tackles major barriers to productivity: by promoting the opportunity for advancing Skills, taking full advantage of shared Enterprise and Innovation from larger resource pools, acting as a catalyst for Trade and Investment, to unleash the full economic potential of the North.

Challenges

Political Opposition is likely to be a key challenge. Unfortunately, most of the politicians do not fully understand the implications and impacts that would have resulted from the full HS2 Eastern Leg and TfN rail schemes on their local and regional commuter services. Instead, the focus has been on Investment, and in our view, Investment at all costs. We do not consider this prudent.

For example: there has been much debate over the last 6 years on how to provide more services between Sheffield and Leeds using the existing Dearne Valley, single track rail route. The issue is that there is not sufficient capacity to

run stopping commuter trains with additional high-speed services. Just to electrify a small section of the existing line to allow high-speed services, from the Sheffield Midland Station to the outskirts of the City, will mean raising 15 bridges which carry congested and heavy volumes of road traffic on these main arterial roads over these bridges. Alternatively, as an option, it is unlikely that bridges can be lowered due to Floodplains.

The Sheffield City Region solution: to provide a new Parkway rail station in Barnsley. This will not solve the issues but will cost additional £billions to build a new station and vast car park, a new proposed station which would be located between 2 existing stations, both less than 1 mile away. The new Parkway station could only be accessed by road and so the proposals must incur additional costs for new infrastructure and new roads to the new Parkway station. For all this investment, it would force people into their cars to access the station, for a one-service per hour provision in a very deprived area where no demand exists. We consider this is an instance where the tail is wagging the dog and where the IRP intervention presents realistic solutions to improving capacity and connectivity without the need for frivolous infrastructure and needless expenditure.

Within the IRP the Sheffield to Leeds section is still under Review. We maintain that to deliver the upgrades needed to achieve the true objectives of this Dearne Valley section and route, the costs remain prohibitive.

The Combined Campaign Group has submitted a response on our behalf and have made suggestions as to how this might be achieved, as have our Crofton colleagues. In addition to these, might we suggest another alternate solution: In addition to the much-needed upgrades and electrification of the Midland Main Line that the IRP proposes, this could be extended to the Sheffield Meadowhall rail station. From there services from London and Birmingham could travel through to Barnsley Town centre station, to Wakefield and on to Leeds.

It is our opinion that after six years of debate there is no realistic Dearne Valley solution, and as such, alternative and less congested routes could be considered.

Key advantages:

- Barnsley would get high-speed services in the main station, without the need to build a new Parkway.
- The IRP provides improved connectivity with High-Speed serving most of SY, including Sheffield and Doncaster.
- New services between Sheffield and Leeds without the need for new lines and infrastructure.
- Sheffield Meadowhall station has superior and existing rail connectivity to all SY Towns within the region.
- Potentially, improved journey times between Sheffield and Leeds.
- Demand for high-speed services is greater at Meadowhall over Midland Station option.
- Huddersfield people could benefit from access and connectivity to high-speed services from Meadowhall, thus increasing the 1.7million audience further.

In support of our proposal:

Demand

- A report commissioned by Sheffield Council themselves, clearly strengthens the support for a Meadowhall station – the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive survey states – **325% more people would travel high speed from the Meadowhall station location compared to a City Centre (Victoria) station location.**
- A second report commissioned by Sheffield Council – BPD in 2015 – supports the Meadowhall station option and identifies individual council demands. Doncaster, Rotherham, Bassetlaw and Barnsley Councils total, has far greater demand than those just from Sheffield. Their combined daily trips to London total 1082, compared to 728 from Sheffield. **The Midland option alone precludes an additional 1082 daily commuters from accessing high speed services.**
- The IRP addresses this with both Sheffield and Doncaster now having access but it could go further by including Barnsley as a station and providing access for Huddersfield, which could be commercially sound.
- 2043 Passenger Weekly Trips forecast for each location, contained in HS2 ltd Options for Phase 2 of the High-Speed Rail Network transparently

endorses the Meadowhall station option over Midland. **Collated passenger numbers demonstrate as an HS2 station - Meadowhall delivers a 500% minimum increase over the Midland option.**

	Meadowhall	Victoria	Midland*
London	3700	4700	940
East Midland	300	700	140
Birmingham	900	1300	NONE
Leeds	1700	3000	NONE
North East	600	1900	380
TOTAL	7200	13060	1460

*Midland figures include zero passengers as there would be no links to Birmingham and assume no passengers from Leeds will travel High Speed to Sheffield as quicker services currently exist, Meadowhall and Victoria are based on 5/6 train per hour, Midland has only two half-trains per hour, so Midland is based on a fifth of that of Victoria.

If the IRP is to deliver on its promises of improved access, connectivity and capacity, then the much-needed upgrades and electrification of the East Coast Mainline, Station upgrades and 4 tracking must be completed and swiftly. We consider the IRP to be robust, however, what it proposes will not be an easy task, since if it were easy, it would have been done before now.

In addition to these, we suggest an amendment be adopted within the Plan – we ask that the Committee consider the inclusion of an extended route and Rail Link to the growing Regional Sheffield/Doncaster Airport from the East Coast Mainline. In doing so, it will release Capacity and Station constraints.

It is our very strong belief that both recommendations would be value for money solutions and we ask that they be explored further.

Solutions - Potential Amendments

As previously stated, recommendation to release Capacity and Station constraints, increase Connectivity, Access and Services:

- Leeds to Sheffield route – utilise Sheffield Meadowhall Station, route through to Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds.

- Rail Link to growing Regional Sheffield/Doncaster Airport from East Coast Mainline.

The JRP would like to be kept informed and participate in any and all future consultations and would welcome the opportunity to attend any meetings with specific reference to the IRP.

Please accept and include this submission as our response to the consultation Inquiry of the proposed IRP.

January 2022