



Bee Network Committee

Date: Thursday 21st March 2024

Subject: Greater Manchester HS2 and NPR Programme – Network North

Report of: Martin Lax, Transport Strategy Director, TfGM

Purpose of Report

To provide the Committee with a progress update on high speed rail and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) following the Network North announcement on 04 October 2023.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the current position in relation to the HS2 and NPR programme in Greater Manchester, the future areas of development and current Government timeframes.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

No equalities implications have been identified at this stage.

Risk Management

There are and will continue to be high levels of uncertainty on the HS2 and NPR programmes for some time whilst the Government, GM and partners work through the implications of the Network North announcement.

Legal Considerations

Set out in the report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority, High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Main Bill Petition, 5 August 2022 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/hybridbillpetition/137/default/>
- Transport for Greater Manchester, High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Main Bill Petition, 5 August 2022 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/hybridbillpetition/127/default/>
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority, High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill, Additional Provision Petition, 16 August 2023 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/hybridbillpetition/228/default/>
- Transport for Greater Manchester, High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill, Additional Provision 2 Petition, 16 August 2023 - <https://committees.parliament.uk/hybridbillpetition/229/default/>

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Transport Capital Programme. 26 May 2023 – [GMCA 20230210 Transport Capital Programme \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#).
- Bee Network Committee, 26 October 2023 - ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Bee Network Committee, 26/10/2023 14:00 \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)
- Notice of Decisions agreed at the Bee Network Committee held on 26 October 2023 - [Minutes Template \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

1. Background

- 1.1. On 24 January 2022 the Government introduced the High-Speed (Crewe – Manchester) hybrid Bill into Parliament seeking the legal powers to build and operate this phase of the high-speed railway, as shown on Map 1 in the Appendix. GM Partners (made up of GMCA, TfGM, Manchester City Council, Trafford Council and Wigan Council) submitted petitions against this Bill and its second additional provision to ensure the beneficial effects of the proposal were maximised and its adverse effects minimised.
- 1.2. GM Partners had appeared at the HS2 Phase 2's Select Committee to present their case for an underground high speed station at Manchester Piccadilly and were preparing to present on other petition points when on the 4th of October 2023, the Government rescoped HS2, including cancelling HS2 Phases 2a (Birmingham to Crewe) and 2b (Crewe to Manchester). At the same time, Government announced that the £36 billion earmarked for these projects would be re-invested into “Network North”.
- 1.3. The Government also announced that HS2 Phase 1 will be completed between Old Oak Common and Birmingham, with an unfunded commitment for a reduced 6 platform Euston station (originally 11, then 10 platforms). London to Manchester services would then operate via the high-speed line to Birmingham, then on the West Coast Mainline (WCML) to Manchester. No assessment of the impact of this proposal on the rail network or plans for enhanced capacity on WCML were provided.
- 1.4. The Network North initiative allocated funds to expand the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) programme with £2 billion being allocated towards a new station at Bradford and connection to Manchester, electrification of additional lines in the North and an additional £12 billion “to better connect Manchester to Liverpool” as part of the Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds element of the NPR network. The Network North plan also allocated funds to several projects in the North and beyond across several modes of transport (subject to appropriate business cases). This report focuses on the High Speed 2 and NPR aspects of the Network North plan.
- 1.5. At the same time, Government announced that HS2 Phase 2a “safeguarding will be formally lifted in weeks” and that “Phase 2b safeguarding will be amended by

summer next year” to enable delivery of the NPR component of the HS2 Phase 2b hybrid Bill. Land not needed will be sold.

1.6. The Bee Network Committee on 26 October resolved to:

- supports a public inquiry into the handling of HS2, and subsequent decision to cancel the route between Birmingham and Manchester, with the view to understanding what lessons can be learnt about future infrastructure projects of this size and significance.
- supports calls for the protection of land along routes 2A & 2B including the immediate stoppage of any sales in progress until a complete review takes places.

2. Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)

2.1. It is understood that the Government’s intention for the £12bn¹ to better connect Manchester to Liverpool was to provide the infrastructure between High Legh and Piccadilly, that NPR would have shared with HS2, and for the HS2 Phase 2b Bill to be repurposed to deliver this NPR route. An additional c£5bn¹ is allocated in the Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North for the High Legh to Liverpool connection.

2.2. The HS2 Phase 2b hybrid Bill was introduced into the current session of Parliament on 08 November, paving the way for it to be repurposed to deliver its NPR component. A decision is yet to be made on whether the HS2 Phase 2b hybrid Bill can be repurposed to deliver its NPR component. At this stage, HS2 Phase 2b’s Select Committee has been asked not to reconvene pending further instruction from the House of Commons.

2.3. As part of the Network North announcement, regarding the Liverpool to Manchester allocation, Government pledged to “work with local leaders to agree whether they wish to suggest other ways to achieve the objectives within that cost envelope”. Arrangements will need to be made to achieve this.

2.4. Government is looking to reach consensus with Regional Partners, including GMCA and the GM Partners, Liverpool City Region, Warrington Council, Cheshire East

¹ 2023 prices

Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, on the strategic route of the Manchester to Liverpool NPR connection.

- 2.5. GM's requirement for this route is an underground through NPR station at Manchester Piccadilly via a tunnel to a new Manchester Airport NPR station and onwards to Warrington Town Centre and then on to Liverpool; making use of the broad alignment previously set out in the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) hybrid Bill to avoid further delays in delivering much needed rail connectivity in the North.
- 2.6. An underground through station at Manchester Piccadilly would enable increased capacity of the station thereby enhancing connectivity and stimulating growth to the benefit of the North and the UK. It also maximises the regeneration potential of East Manchester and reduces disruption and blight to the communities around this area.
- 2.7. A new NPR station serving Manchester Airport will be a crucial investment into the connectivity of a critical economic asset for GM and the whole North, as the third busiest airport in the country, the main international hub outside the South East, and a key GM attractor for inward investment.
- 2.8. As with the previously proposed HS2 Phase 2b proposal, the NPR High Legh to Manchester Piccadilly impacts on the built and natural environment within GM will be considered as part of the scheme's development process.
- 2.9. The Liverpool to Manchester connection now needs to be developed and delivered in a way that puts economic growth and placemaking at the forefront of the proposals, working with local and regional leaders to ensure the final proposal for this route delivers on the objectives of NPR - providing effective and efficient rail connectivity between these two major economic centres, offering a faster and more reliable service across the entire region thereby supporting the transformation of the North's economy.

3. London Birmingham Manchester Connectivity

- 3.1. The cancellation of HS2 Phase 2a and 2b by the Prime Minister and his announcement of Network North leaves unresolved the problems on the WCML which these schemes were meant to address.
- 3.2. The Government is yet to release any information on the assessment it made of the future capacity needs on the WCML which informed the decision to cancel HS2

Phase 2a and 2b. Since the cancellation of the scheme, several issues have been identified with the Network North's HS2 proposal including reduced train capacity, reduced seated capacity between London and Manchester and possible connectivity issues with HS2 services stopping at Old Oak Common station, some 4.5 miles west of Euston with passengers needing to change to complete their journey into central London. These issues will need to be addressed by the Government and Network Rail so that rail connectivity to the North is not worse than it was before the need for HS2 Phase 2a and 2b were identified.

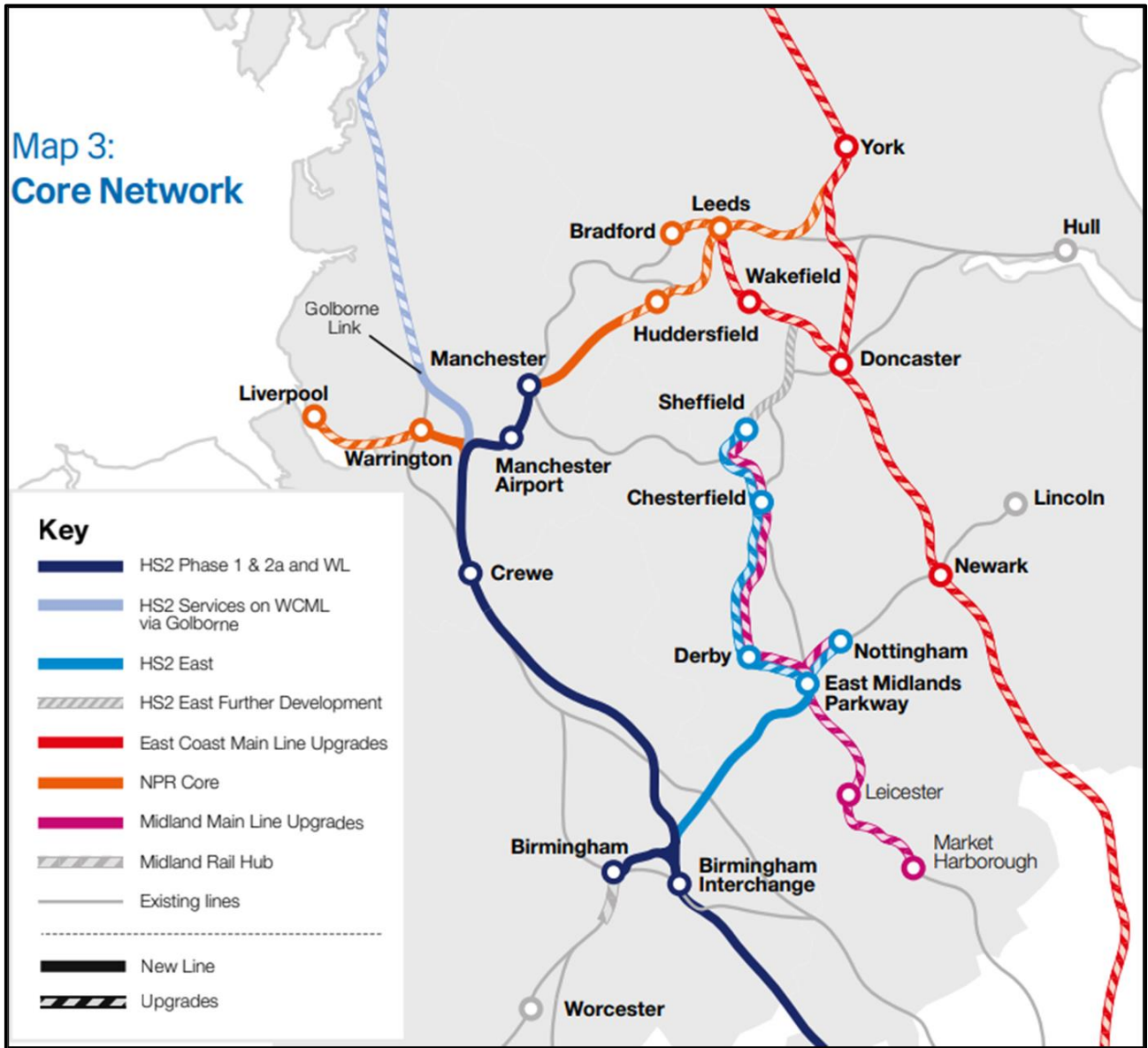
- 3.3. Following the Network North announcement, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Mayor of West Midlands have been working with a Private Consortium to investigate alternative connectivity improvements options between Manchester and Birmingham, including funding and delivery options for these. This study is focusing on rail connectivity between Handsacre Junction on the WCML, where HS2 Phase 1 will end, and High Legh in Cheshire, where the NPR connection from Manchester to Liverpool is to be built, as identified on Map 2 in the Appendix.
- 3.4. The Consortium is being led by Sir David Higgins (who was formerly Chairman of HS2) and involves private engineering and finance companies including Arup, Arcadis, EY, Skanska, Addleshaw Goddard, and Mace.
- 3.5. The Consortium, along with the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Mayor of West Midlands met with the Transport Secretary on the 31st of January to update him on the work being undertaken by the private consortium.
- 3.6. The Consortium's Steering Group met on the 7th of February to report on progress made and agree its next steps. The Consortium is considering three potential options:
 - Minimal interventions to the WCML at its most constrained sections, which is likely to represent the lowest cost option, but which brings least wider benefits.
 - Short bypass sections of the busiest sections of the WCML.
 - A segregated line following a similar alignment to the HS2 proposals but with a different specification which is likely to reduce cost while driving wider benefits.
- 3.7. A further Steering Group meeting is expected to take place in March, before the Consortium publishes its final report for this initial phase of work.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. It is anticipated that the strategic route for Liverpool to Manchester connectivity will be confirmed shortly. GM now expects Government to collaborate with regional and local partners and carry out further joint work to enable the specific scheme proposals to be agreed, including the station solutions and the alignment.
- 4.2. TfGM and the GM Partners are working with Regional Partners to consider the Liverpool to Manchester, via Manchester Airport and Warrington proposals and how these are taken forward in more detail.
- 4.3. In particular, TfGM and the GM Partners are considering the proposals between High Legh and Piccadilly, in terms of the infrastructure required to meet the objectives and requirements of NPR, with economic growth and placemaking at the forefront of the proposals.
- 4.4. With the hybrid Bill being introduced into the current session of Parliament, and the intention for the Bill to be repurposed for NPR, the issues raised within the GMCA, TfGM and GM Partners' petitions still stand and will need to be resolved through negotiations or via the hybrid Bill Select Committee.
- 4.5. TfGM and the GM Partners are also continuing to assess the impacts of Network North, and the proposals to run HS2 services on the WCML. This will include continued engagement with the Private Consortium and Network Rail.
- 4.6. In May 2023, GMCA approved the draw-down of CRSTS funding to continue the development of HS2 / NPR programme. This included transport-related design and development work on Metrolink and high-speed stations, station integration, costing and funding, and wider connectivity packages for stations at Piccadilly, Manchester Airport, Wigan and Stockport. Post the Network North announcement, this funding continues to be used to support the NPR and HS2 / WCML impacts development work, which builds on the work carried out prior to the Network North announcement.
- 4.7. It is proposed that TfGM will provide regular updates to the Bee Network Committee as the programme progresses.

Appendix

Map 1. HS2 / NPR Original Core Network



Map 2. Private Consortium's Study Area

