



# High Speed Rail Levelling Up Voices

August 2022



About High Speed Rail Group

High Speed Rail Group (HSRG) is committed to supporting the successful delivery of a world-class high speed rail network in Britain. Our members have helped deliver major infrastructure projects in the UK and around the world, including creating entirely new high speed networks and improving the UK’s existing rail network. This gives us a unique insight into both the shortcomings of the current network and the transformative capacity, connectivity and carbon benefits that high speed rail brings. We support a national high speed rail network which includes the delivery of HS2, high speed rail’s integration with the existing network and investment to maximise the released capacity benefits HS2 brings on and off route, along with other rail investments such as Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Engine Rail.

Find out more at [www.rail-leaders.com](http://www.rail-leaders.com)

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# FOREWORD

Andy Street  
Mayor of the West Midlands



I welcome the work of the High Speed Rail Group—particularly at a time when we are understandably keen to ensure the Government maintains a rock solid commitment to Levelling Up.

Investing in our nation’s transport infrastructure plays a vital role in bringing the Levelling Up agenda to life. I know this to be the case in the region I represent. Here in the West Midlands, we have seen the transformative impact of substantial Government investments like the £1.05 billion City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement.

With regards to substantial Government investments, HS2 of course stands out. Even before its completion, we are already deriving a range of important benefits from HS2 as we strive to make the most of this once in a generation infrastructure investment. The prospect

of much improved connectivity is helping to unlock major residential developments around forthcoming station sites. And alongside Balfour Beatty Vinci, our HS2 Skills Academies are enabling thousands of local residents—regardless of their backgrounds—to rapidly access high quality job opportunities as part of the construction of this landmark project.

I hope you enjoy reading this publication which showcases the tremendous economic opportunities contained within HS2—and transport infrastructure more broadly—for places right across the UK.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the coronavirus pandemic, economic recovery is central to the Government’s forward-looking agenda. Without a broad-based economic expansion, it is difficult to address other challenges, from health to education. Both of the final two candidates in the Conservative leadership contest acknowledge that the UK economy faces ‘challenging’ times and have spoken of their ‘bold’ plans to boost the UK economy, and being ‘determined to deliver’. But an economic resurgence cannot be achieved without engaging the cities and regions outside of London and the South East. London’s dominance can be traced back to over a century ago, and it is an issue which successive governments have grappled with. One of the factors in the unbalanced national economy has been historic under-investment in regional transport systems.

Transport is vital to a productive and well-connected economy, allowing the efficient movement of people and goods in towns and cities across the UK. Done right, investment in transport infrastructure can create larger and more unified labour markets, improve peoples’ access to local services, enhance firm-to-firm connectivity, and expand access to new and existing markets. In other words, transport has an essential role to play in ‘Levelling Up’, the current Government’s flagship policy. Levelling up is about boosting living standards, investing in skills and education, and restoring local pride and opportunity across the UK. If we are to achieve these things, we must connect our communities using efficient, modernised transport infrastructure.

In February the Government released the Levelling Up White Paper, which sets out how they will seek to achieve this aim. The White Paper acknowledged that investment in transport has historically flowed to places where infrastructure is under the greatest strain, as opposed to where it is least extensive. It has been considerably higher in London and the South of England

compared to other parts of the UK, with almost a third (30%) of all public transport infrastructure spend concentrated in London. The White Paper described transport infrastructure as ‘an important form of physical capital because it reduces distances between places and provides people, firms and workers with increased market access.’ In short, if we are to truly level up the United Kingdom, then these transport inequalities must be addressed before we can seek to correct wider disparities in prosperity and opportunity.

However, a general lack of more substantive proposals to further invest in rail, and in high speed rail infrastructure in particular, beyond the confines of the Government’s Integrated Rail Plan was disappointing. As multiple contributors to this report note, our commitment to delivering large transformational infrastructure projects must be expanded if the Government are to truly succeed in spreading resources, power and affluence right across the country.

And the White Paper itself pointed to the transport led regeneration of Birmingham that has taken place as a result of HS2. A case study detailed how ‘Curzon Street station will be the first completely new rail terminus in the heart of the city in over 100 years’, highlighting the vision to make the station a focal point for transformation, development and economic growth as well as providing efficient onward transport links. The economic benefits of HS2 will continue to grow, with the Midlands 2021 HS2 Growth Strategy anticipating 43,600 gross and 19,600 net additional jobs, 2,200 additional new homes and £1.6bn per annum in net additional GVA around

the Curzon Street area.<sup>1</sup> Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority Andy Street speaks to the regeneration benefits that are already being felt in his foreword to this report.

As the country looks to stage an economic recovery, HS2 brings into focus the essential relationship between effective major infrastructure and multiplier effects. It will form the new spine of our rail system, linking the North, the Midlands and the South East and it must form an important part of the investment programme ahead. It has the potential to change the economic geography of the country and become a catalyst for growth by bringing Britain together, closing the distances between our major towns and cities, linking the regions and devolved nations together. HS2 will bring more investment to the Midlands and the North, opening up new leisure and business opportunities for millions of people.

As acknowledged by West Yorkshire Combined Authority Chief Executive Ben Still in his contribution to this report there is no hiding from the fact that there were a number of communities, including his own, that were left disappointed when the Integrated Rail Plan was published last year. Polling undertaken by Opinium on behalf of the High Speed Rail Group earlier this year found that the decision to curtail HS2’s Eastern Leg, and with it the line’s connection to Leeds, undermined the people of Yorkshire’s faith in the levelling up agenda—with 42% opposed to cuts to the scheme. Over four in ten, 41%, thought the decision showed that the Government cared less about levelling up.

This reflected a wider dissatisfaction with transport investment. Three-quarters (76%) of Yorkshire’s residents said they receive less than their fair share compared to London. Over 9 in 10 (92%) said that transport is important to improving the economy and prosperity of Yorkshire. Further emphasising its importance, when asked what three areas of infrastructure should be prioritised in the levelling-up of Yorkshire, transport was most popular with two-thirds (66%) choosing this option.<sup>2</sup> It is not just the opinion of certain politicians that transport plays an important part in levelling up: it is the view of the general public too.

Britain’s first high speed rail line (HS1) from London across Kent to the channel tunnel provides a sense of the tangible levelling up benefits that high speed rail can bring. HS1, and the services which make use of it, supports more than £427m of economic benefits to the UK and the near-continent Europe every year. London’s employees benefit from access to more affordable housing in Kent, with HS1 also allowing a further 164,000 households in Kent to access job opportunities in London. London’s labour market has access to an additional 63,000 highly-skilled individuals with higher education qualifications. Kent, London and multiple key destinations in Europe also benefit from international services as HS1 contributes to over £400m of annual trade between the South East and the continent, unlocking foreign direct investment and supporting £2bn of tourist expenditure each year.<sup>3</sup> Imagine how this would be multiplied with a truly national high speed rail network.

1. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1052706/Levelling\\_Up\\_WP\\_HRES.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf)

2. <https://www.rail-leaders.com/industry-news/new-polling-shows-yorkshire-opposes-cuts-to-hs2-eastern-leg/>  
3. <https://highspeed1.co.uk/media/vemkxmot/delivering-for-britain-and-beyond-the-economic-impact-of-hs1-march-2020.pdf>



Our Voices

The contributions contained within this report come from a range of voices and regions. They speak to the important benefits that improved transport infrastructure, and HS2 specifically, could deliver to their areas. Time and again, they make the case that this is not about taking investment from London, but ensuring that regions up and down the country are treated fairly and afforded the same opportunities as the capital.

As Cardiff City Council Leader Huw Thomas says in his article, ‘If we are to fully leverage the economic potential of city regions, then a focus on strategic transport projects is a pre-requisite for success.’ Martin Tugwell, CEO of Transport for the North, speaks to how his own organisation has sought to challenge the traditional Treasury Green Book system used for determining where investment should be prioritised, ‘a reaction to how the system inherently favours areas of the economy, like London, that are already overheated.’ Whilst Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Steve Rotheram sums this up in perhaps the strongest terms, saying ‘the reality is that if the North received the same level of transport funding per person as the capital, it would have seen £86bn more.’

Closely connected to this is the idea of combatting transport related exclusion. Siemens CEO Will Wilson writes that ‘for passengers in particular we can level up transport poverty, with public transport needing to be in reach, both physically and easy to plan and navigate for everyone, regardless of where they live or their particular circumstances.’ Martin Tugwell points to Transport for the North’s research on the phenomenon, saying it is often concentrated in former manufacturing and mining areas and in industrial and multi-ethnic communities, meaning that residents from these areas are unable to access opportunities, key services, and community life as much as needed, facing major obstacles in everyday life through

the wider impacts of having to travel. Whilst Steve Rotheram describes how ‘for every minute on the roughly two-hour train journey from London to the Liverpool City Region ... household income per head falls by £155. Proper investment in rail infrastructure was supposed to fix that.’

Access to education and skills is seen as a major levelling up benefit of transport and investment, and contributor Ian Fitzpatrick, Principal and Chief Executive of the National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure, speaks to the role that HS2 specifically is playing in levelling up access to skills in this space. He describes how filling roles on HS2 ‘depends on the availability of highly-skilled people across these regions: in this way, HS2 has already been a real catalyst for growth in highlighting the need to ‘level up’ the nation’s skillset, and quickly.’ He talks about the importance of ‘sustainable skills delivery’ and HS2’s own skills and education model to ‘leave a skills legacy for the transport infrastructure sector and the wider UK economy.’ So, not only is transport infrastructure an enabler of access to education, in HS2 we’re seeing a major piece of infrastructure prompting advancement of the skills agenda.

Our contributors also coalesce around a desire to show more ambition in our transport infrastructure, particularly with regards to high speed rail. Manchester City Council Leader Bev Craig speaks to regional concerns around current plans for an overground HS2 terminus at Manchester Piccadilly, planned in opposition to local preference for an underground station. Craig says the former would ‘severely restrict both the potential for regeneration and the station’s ability to support future growth’, arguing that the final station design will have significant implications for the rest of the North, especially for east-west connections and the prospect of delivering Norther Powerhouse Rail as it was originally conceived. Whilst Huw Thomas speaks to merits of transforming the ‘Y’ shaped HS2 network into an ‘X’, and in turn

properly connecting Wales into the high speed rail network. He argues that ‘an X shaped high speed rail network which properly connects the Cardiff City Region to other UK Regions and Nations is exactly the sort of ambitious vision for the future rail network that we need’ to deliver a truly national levelling up agenda.

In line with this, some of our writers also call for ambition in relation to the planned £100m study, promised by the Government in the Integrated Rail Plan, which will explore options for bringing HS2 trains to Leeds. West Yorkshire’s Ben Still makes the case that ‘any study of Leeds needs to look in the round at how capacity can be provided for services approaching from all directions, and consider the full range of capacity providing solutions – including the ‘T-shaped’ station expansion that was envisaged under HS2’, with an urgent need to address the expansion of Leeds Station ‘which is rapidly being recognised as the national bottleneck for which there is no solution’. Without this question being resolved, there is a clear fear that Leeds is at risk of being left behind in the move to level up.

As Jacobs Rail Client Account Director Craig Munro says in his contribution ‘to become a truly customer and passenger-focused industry, we must understand the needs of passengers and communities, both now and in 30 years’ time.’

Relating to infrastructure, what becomes increasingly clear from our contributions to this report is that any effective combination of policies needs to include long-term strategic planning, improvements in the way projects are appraised and selected, and coordination and cooperation across both public and private sectors. Though HS2 is an important example of this, this approach it is equally applicable to other transport investments across the country. As Manchester City Council leader Bev Craig writes, ‘Any serious

policy which sets out to rebalance the nation’s economy and increase its productivity needs to have an efficient public transport system at its heart.’ If we are to truly level up the United Kingdom, and spread opportunity and prosperity more evenly across the country, this focus on transport infrastructure must be something that both current and future governments are prepared to take on board.

The aim in assembling this collection of ‘Voices’ is to add something to the ongoing debate around levelling up and to the Government’s aims for national economic recovery. We hope it will succeed in widening readers’ understanding of the contribution that high speed rail can make in supporting these vital objectives.



**Martin Tugwell**  
Chief Executive, Transport for the North

Martin is responsible for transforming pan-Northern connectivity in order to improve productivity and drive economic growth.

He leads Transport for the North as England's first sub-national transport body, giving the North a strong, unified and determined voice on transport investment to benefit the region.

Martin has more than 20 years of experience in strategic transport and infrastructure planning at national, regional and local levels. Immediately prior to joining Transport for the North, Martin was Director for England's Economic Heartland (EEH), one of England's 7 sub-national transport bodies, leading on the creation of the EEH Transport Strategy—Connecting People, Transforming Journeys.

## THE NORTH CAN BE A LEVELLING UP SUCCESS STORY, WITH THE RIGHT TRANSPORT INVESTMENT

Understanding transport is about understanding people and places. There is latent potential in both. If they can be understood, then their potential can be realised.

It's a startling fact that, in the North of England, more than a fifth of the population suffer from some form of 'Transport Related Social Exclusion'. This means that there are real inhibitors preventing them from enjoying the same sort of life opportunities as the remaining 80 per cent.

Transport for the North has recently completed a major new study on Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRES) researching over 3000 members of the public, experts from across the North and using a new and bespoke data tool to measure the risk of exclusion.

We found that it was a widespread phenomenon across the North but was often concentrated in former manufacturing and mining areas and in industrial and multi-ethnic communities. What does it mean for those affected? It means being unable to access opportunities, key services, and community life as much as needed, and facing major obstacles in everyday life through the wider impacts of having to travel. These wider impacts include the cost and time entailed in using the transport system, and the impacts of stress and anxiety linked with using the transport system. Together, these impacts can contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty, isolation, and poor access to basic services.

And let's not pretend that life is especially rosy for the other 80 per cent either. A legacy Victorian rail system and a highly congested road network means, even those who are financially comfortable often face a struggle in going about their daily business, and that directly affects the contribution that they are able to make to society.

Having evidenced the problem, we can begin to understand its cost to society and people's lives—and all the evidence we have indicates that it is substantial. Transport for the North has already challenged the traditional 'Green Book' system used for determining where investment should be prioritised, a reaction to how the system inherently favours areas of the economy, like London, that are already overheated.

But a key point here is that, if you have an economy that has been neglected, or whose industrial base has been stripped away, it takes time and investment to put it on a level par with other areas of the country that have not had to face such economic erosion. This dilemma describes much of the North—and it is why successive Governments have struggled to make much progress in stopping the rot.

The first thing that's needed is to get a grip of the situation. To take an honest and frank look at the economic landscape in front of you and the legacy issues left by its history. You can think of it a bit like a rusty old machine with some parts that are no longer needed, some which need refurbishing, some repurposing and most needing good lubrication if the cogs are ever to turn again and the machine produce an output.

This particular machine contains 15.4 million people. We cannot just write it off because it's been allowed to go rusty. It needs a complete overhaul and expert interventions to make it fit for purpose and for the potential of its people and places to be realised.

Shying away from the investment because some of the parts are expensive is not an option—because many of those parts are interdependent—if one cog does not turn then neither will the other—and if the cogs are not aligned or machined correctly then the machine



will not function as it needs to. It's why a failure to invest in enabling people and places to realise their potential leads to wider costs to society that will ultimately exceed the cost of that investment.

All this is exactly why Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan and Evidence Base are such valuable tools. You can think of them a bit like a Service Book and a Haynes Manual—without them it would be very hard to know what is being done and how to do what needs doing.

Road and rail provide the conduits for the oil, the lifeblood of the economic engine. They, and the parts they supply, must be in good order for the whole mechanism to work—and they need to be used in the right way for the economic engine of the North to be sustainable and meet emissions tests.

There is a serious side to this rather stretched analogy. The North is a complex place—a place with a challenging topography, a mixed economy and a disparate range of economic and social centres. No other entity, other than Transport for the North, has so far been able to articulate how these multi-faceted components inter-relate. To level up, in a sustainable way, a common understanding of the issues and challenges is essential. Thanks to the work of TfN, we are now significantly closer to having that understanding than we were six years ago.

Yes, there are still tensions and fiscal pressures to be faced; but the North now genuinely understands its exam question: it has done the revision and research that enables it to articulate some answers.

Key to realising the potential of our people and places is the need for investment to improve connectivity, both across the North and with the rest of the UK.

It is in this context that TfN has been an ardent supporter of HS2, not just as a project in its own right but as a key component of the step change in connectivity that will connect people and places with services and opportunities. Achieving that step change in connectivity is also fundamental to changing travel behaviours in a way that delivers sustainable economic growth.

The Government's commitment to HS2 gives added confidence to the private sector to invest in the North. It reinforces how the decisions we make on transport can be a major agent for change when it comes to making 'levelling up' real.

I talked earlier about people and places. If we are to truly make a difference then the life chances of people must be improved through better education and the places they live must be improved by investment in education, health and housing infrastructure too. Of course, what helps justify that investment is being able to connect people and places with transport arteries that provide productive pathways to new opportunities.

None of this can be done overnight. It requires vision, fortitude and ambition—but perhaps most of all it requires a strong evidence base upon which to build and that is something Transport for the North is immensely proud to bring to the party.







**Steve Rotheram**  
Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Raised in Kirkby, Merseyside, Steve left school at 16 to pursue a career as an apprentice bricklayer before later going on to work for the Learning and Skills Council.

Steve was elected to serve as a councillor in 2002, representing Fazakerley ward on Liverpool City Council until 2010, when he was elected as the MP for Liverpool Walton.

In 2017, Steve was elected as the first Liverpool City Region Mayor, during which time he has helped to deliver 10,000 new jobs and 7,000 apprenticeships, set out plans for London-style transport and set a target for the region to become net zero by 2040.

## THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION MUST BE FULLY INTEGRATED INTO A PAN-NORTHERN TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Railways have been the backbone of our country's economy for centuries, driving productivity and connecting our communities to opportunity for more than 200 years.

Home to Stephenson's Rocket, built in 1829 as the world's first inter-city passenger railway and the world's oldest passenger railway junction at Earlestown, the Liverpool City Region has as strong a claim as any to be the birthplace of modern railways.

It's a legacy that we're rightly proud of—and one we're continuing today with the arrival of our new £500m publicly-owned trains, which will be the greenest, most accessible and most sophisticated fleet anywhere in the UK.

The simple fact is that both then and now, trains are vital to my region's—and the wider north of England's—fortunes.

Yet for decades, communities across the North have been held back from fulfilling their potential by a lack of connectivity, having been forced to contend with short sighted solutions and consistent underfunding.

While places like London absorb the lion's share of public expenditure on transport, the reality is that if the North received the same level of transport funding per person as the capital, it would have seen £86bn more.

But our railways are about far more than just getting people from place to place. They are a driver for, and a barometer of, social justice in this country. For every minute on the roughly two-hour train journey from London to the Liverpool City Region, for example, household income per head falls by £155. Proper investment in rail infrastructure was supposed to fix that.

For decades, successive Prime Ministers of all stripes have promised the North transformational investment in our railways that would cut journey times, increase capacity, improve connectivity, and help to rebalance the UK's economic geography.

It was soon-to-be former Prime Minister Boris Johnson who said that transport was one of "the supreme leveller-uppers" and that his Government would deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail in full—and the sun has now set on any chance of him being the one to deliver that promise.

There's a certain irony that while standing in front of the aforementioned Stephenson's Rocket, our departing Prime Minister said to a packed audience at the Manchester Science and Industry Museum in 2019: "I want to be a Prime Minister who does with Northern Powerhouse Rail what we did for Crossrail in London."

At face value, a comparison to a project on the scale of the £19bn Crossrail, now known as the Elizabeth Line, might sound admirable. But the reality is that the project was four and a half years late—and £4bn over budget.

The Government's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) announced in November dashed any hopes that Northern leaders might have had. Despite the eye-watering sums of money being trumpeted by Grant Shapps and the DfT—the reality is that the new money is a fraction of the £96bn headline sum.

In the Liverpool City Region, we were promised that we would get increased freight capacity out of the Port of Liverpool, freeing up more room on the tracks for passenger services.





They told us that the local economy would get a substantial boost through better, faster connections.

They raised our expectations to the point that we were expecting *Grand Designs*, but instead we were offered *60 Minute Makeover*.

Their proposals for our area—Option 5.1—are a cheap and nasty option that would undoubtedly leave our region no better connected, even more congested, and arguably financially worse off.

The hit to our local economy could cost more than £280 million during an extended period of disruption, while adding more than half a million journeys to our roads—and will not deliver the high speed journeys that we were told to expect.

The overspend on the Crossrail project alone was £4bn—whereas our preferred option would cost a little over £5bn in total. We are once again being short-changed by Westminster. So, when Government ministers talk about ‘London-style’ transport across the North, just know that this is in name only.

That is before we even touch on the impact of their HS2 plans.

For years, the Liverpool City Region was assured that we would get a new twin-track high speed line from Liverpool city centre to Manchester via Warrington.

The removal of the Golborne Link, without adequate replacement, will create significant capacity constraints on the rail network north of Crewe, including routes to Liverpool via Runcorn and via Warrington/St Helens.

Removal will be a hindrance to growth in other passenger services, and significantly, freight services. The section of the West Coast Main Line north of Crewe is critical to realising the potential for modal shift from road to rail for freight, particularly with the expansion of the Port of Liverpool and the recent designation of the Liverpool City Region as a Freeport.

Good connectivity is no longer a luxury or a ‘nice to have’—it’s an essential 21st century necessity that is vital to the North’s long-term economic success—and to the Government’s levelling up strategy.

Whoever comes next, we need a Prime Minister who is serious about addressing regional inequality. Whether they choose to call it levelling up; the Northern Powerhouse, or if it is rebadged as something else entirely, we need reassurance that any new administration is committed to delivering the pan-northern transport system that we deserve.

The Liverpool City Region has been at the heart of the nation’s railways throughout its history. If the Government doesn’t change track, we’ll soon be in need of a transplant.



**Ian Fitzpatrick**  
Principal and Chief Executive, National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure (NCATI)

Ian joined NCATI when it became part of the University of Birmingham group in April 2021, signalling new leadership and a fresh start for the College.

Having worked in automotive engineering, construction, and then in Further Education before becoming principal of NCATI, Ian brings with him a wealth of experience in both industry and education—something that is crucial to running an employer-led training provider like NCATI.

During his time setting up and running his own construction company, Ian had first-hand experience of the skills shortage in this sector, moving into Further Education to start to tackle this.

## LEVELLING UP THE NATION'S SKILLS WITH HIGH SPEED RAIL

As the largest infrastructure project in Europe, HS2 is at the heart of the UK's plans to build back better, creating 34,000 jobs plus an additional 2,000 apprenticeships during its construction, and crucially in regions outside of London.

However, filling these roles depends on the availability of highly-skilled people across these regions: in this way, HS2 has already been a real catalyst for growth in highlighting the need to 'level up' the nation's skillset, and quickly. Indeed, it was recognition of this skills gap that led to the creation of the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure (NCATI), of which HS2 Ltd was a founding sponsor.

Set up in 2017—and originally named the National College for High Speed Rail—the College was established to create the highly-skilled workforce needed to deliver HS2, and to serve the wider transport and infrastructure sector in years to come. After all, while the impact of the rail industry's ageing workforce and wider Brexit implications were brought into sharp relief by HS2, the skills gap is being felt across the sector and needs to be addressed on a larger and longer-term scale. The Government's ongoing investment in existing railway infrastructure, and the probability of future transformational projects across the nation, will continue to put a focus on new skillsets that do not currently exist in abundance within the UK job market.

The skills delivered by the National College will not only help build HS2, but will support the infrastructure programmes of the future too. The College's name was changed to better convey this principle of sustainable skills delivery, an objective that also sits front and centre of HS2's own skills and education model: to 'leave a skills legacy for the transport infrastructure sector and the wider UK economy.'

Key to this objective is ensuring that NCATI trains people in the right skills, at the right time. HS2 has been pivotal in making this happen, providing regular skills and labour intelligence to inform our curriculum offer and ensure it reflects the technology and technical advancements utilised within the industry. From its conception, the National College has been led by this intelligence. The first forecasts identified that a third of the jobs supported within construction occupations during the initial phases of HS2 would require high-level skills (Level 4 and above), and the general workforce would require knowledge and understanding of the emerging technologies in the industry, such as high speed track, digital signalling, and technologically advanced rolling stock.

Until recently, the College has focused on delivering apprenticeships and higher education courses from Level 4 onwards, and in the technologies mentioned above. This is demonstrated by NCATI's first trailblazing apprenticeship standard in High Speed Rail & Infrastructure, which offered apprentices pathways in civil engineering, track, systems engineering, signalling, power, rolling stock, and operations, in recognition of the occupations most urgently required by the HS2 programme. While these elements remain pivotal to NCATI's skills offer, and HS2 and the transport infrastructure sector more broadly, they have since been joined by additional areas of focus, as informed by HS2 and its supply chain.

These additional areas include project management, operations or departmental management and, brand new for September 2022, land referencing, all with dedicated apprenticeships delivered by NCATI, and all with apprentices on them that work for HS2 or its supply chain. 'High speed rail' is therefore much broader than the name would first





suggest, with HS2's labour demand and, in turn through NCATI, its creation of skills and education opportunities, ever-increasing and ever-diversifying.

In response to this demand, since joining the University of Birmingham group in April 2021, NCATI has been working with the University on developing new and exciting routes into the sector, broadening access and ultimately creating a more diverse pipeline of future talent. Having listened to employer partners across the HS2 supply chain, the College will, from September, be extending its apprenticeship and full-time provision to Level 3, delivering this pipeline at an earlier stage. The College will also for the first time be offering civil engineering degree programmes awarded by the University of Birmingham, with accessible entry requirements that attract a more diverse talent pool to the transport and infrastructure sector.

This commitment to accessibility in skills and education opportunities is shared with, and spurred on by, HS2. Whether it is offering university students who live in the Midlands the chance to join HS2 on a paid work placement this summer, or creating thousands of apprenticeship vacancies across its duration, the HS2 programme ensures that people are given every opportunity to access training, enhance their skills and secure employment in the transport and infrastructure sector. NCATI strives to follow this example, and through our newly-developed hub and spoke model, skills and education opportunities will not just be limited to the College's two campuses in Birmingham and Doncaster, but will extend across the UK, truly 'levelling up' the nation's skills.

HS2 is a project, and all projects by their very nature have a beginning and an end. But through its commitment to working with industry to identify skills supply and demand, and its investment in creating accessible routes for people to join the sector, it will undoubtedly leave the nation with a lasting skills legacy. NCATI is certainly proud to be part of that.





**Councillor Bev Craig**  
Leader, Manchester City Council

Bev is leader of Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority's lead member for the Economy, Business and International portfolio.

Born and brought up in Belfast, she moved to Manchester to study in 2003 and made the city her home. She has been a Labour councillor since 2011, serving in various roles before becoming the first woman leader of the City Council in 2021.

Prior to taking on this role, Bev spent four years as executive member for adult services, health, wellbeing and inclusion. She was also deputy chair of Manchester Health and Care Commissioning and co-chair of the Manchester Local Care Organisation.

## A ONCE IN A GENERATION INVESTMENT IN RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE MUST BE DONE RIGHT

Manchester was already at the heart of the industrial revolution when the railway arrived in the city in the 1830s—but the ability to connect cities and towns was transformative in harnessing our economic capacity. When Manchester Piccadilly opened in 1842, it probably would not have been anticipated that 150 years later we would be debating the opportunities of improved connectivity.

Manchester has championed HS2 since it was first conceived and remains a strong advocate of the game-changing benefits it can deliver—not just for the city but for the wider region and northern England as a whole.

But it was with extremely mixed feelings that we followed proceedings as the HS2 Crewe-Manchester Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Commons in June.

For while the extra capacity HS2 will bring is vital, and we welcome the fact it is on its way, we believe the plans as they are currently conceived are flawed and will squander some of the once-in-a-lifetime regeneration benefits created by the new high speed link. Not only that, but the new overground station proposed for Manchester Piccadilly to accommodate HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail lines would be inefficient, unable to cope with future growth and a poor welcome to the city.

We hear a lot about 'Levelling Up'. Any serious policy which sets out to rebalance the nation's economy and increase its productivity needs to have an efficient public transport system at its heart. HS2 must be central to that. Done well as a strategic investment, it can provide a massive stimulus to jobs, investment and the whole northern economy. Done short-sightedly,

it will leave us counting the cost for many decades to come. Without changes to the current plans, we fear significant opportunities to level up will be wasted.

Independent expert analysis commissioned by Manchester City Council and Transport for Greater Manchester (the Bechtel report) demonstrates that the plan for a new overground station at Manchester Piccadilly would severely restrict both the potential for regeneration and the station's ability to support future growth.

To take the former, an overground station and its associated infrastructure would swallow half a million square metres more land—prime development sites which could support 14,000 jobs. A further 2,600 jobs would be lost in the immediate term because of the larger construction zone required by an overground station.

Our analysis suggests that by 2050, the economic benefits to the city and wider region, which would be lost through the overground option, would be worth £333 million a year.

An overground station will also require a great deal of unsightly infrastructure, such as the concrete viaducts needed to take Northern Powerhouse Rail lines across the city centre. This would blight parts of the city and sever connections.

And our modelling shows it would immediately be at full capacity—compromising its reliability and resilience, as well as preventing, rather than enabling, future growth in passenger numbers and services. This is hardly the world class, forward-looking station at the heart of the North's rail network which the region expects.



The alternative we propose, an underground station, would have none of these constraints and—crucially—would be fit for the future. Decisions made now will have implications for the next century or more. As a nation we cannot afford to get them wrong.

The Government have scoffed at the underground alternative, claiming that it will cost £4–5bn more. What the veracity of this figure is, we do not know—the detail of how it was arrived at hasn't been shared with us. But we firmly believe an optimised design could cost far less.

But even if you indulge the upper estimate, you need to take a strategic view about value for money over the station's lifetime—especially when HS2 is one of the projects which is supposed to be addressing historic underinvestment in transport in the north of England.

This is not a parochial concern on Manchester's part. What happens here will have huge implications for the rest of the North, especially for east-west connections, and any prospect of delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail as it was originally conceived rather than the watered down version offered in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Manchester and Greater Manchester will continue to press our case as the Bill proceeds through Parliament, petitioning on the station plan and other elements to minimise disruption and maximise benefits. Our message is being echoed by businesses and MPs.

We know that the rail industry wants to see a world-class HS2 which realises this huge infrastructure project's transformational potential. We've come too far to allow its ambitions to fall short now.







**Will Wilson**  
CEO, Siemens Mobility Limited UKI

Will is CEO of Siemens Mobility Limited, having originally joined the business in 2013. A former Army Officer, Will's broad senior management career has spanned over 25 years and included roles at Invensys Rail, Alstom and GE Transportation as well as leading Siemens Mobility's International Sales team in Spain.

Will is committed to going further and faster to decarbonise our transport network and to creating jobs and growth while doing so. Will is also a passionate advocate for equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

## LEVELLING UP THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECTS

Rail projects can deliver value to cities and regions, supporting levelling up and kickstarting the economy across the UK.

At a time when Government is in flux, public finances are squeezed and soaring inflation is driving up costs, demonstrating the wider benefits of investing in rail is more important than ever.

This is not just about delivering local value on particular investment projects—important though improved connections and reliability, use of local suppliers, and community engagement all are.

It's also about the benefits the investment creates through UK manufacturing, the supply chain and the jobs and skills this supports. We're doing a great job as an industry, and we can do even more with the support of customers and governments.

### Doesn't London get too much of the investment?

How can projects delivered for London benefit other parts of the UK, and support levelling up?

I can tell you first hand. We delivered much of the work on our digital signalling, control and station management systems for the Elizabeth line from our manufacturing facilities in Chippenham in Wiltshire and Ashby in Leicestershire.

Likewise, our contract to build new state-of-the-art Piccadilly line trains has allowed us to invest in a new £200 million facility in Goole in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

We have been able to reach 13 local schools through a partnership with Primary Engineer and our RaisE facility, developed with East Riding of Yorkshire Council, which will house SMEs who

will work in the same building as us, attracting more investment to the area. I've also been told that new homes are being built in the area, as a direct result of our new facility.

This is reflected across the board in terms of what our industry is delivering. More than two-thirds of the whole Elizabeth line came from sources outside London, and sixty to seventy per cent of the project's delivery was provided by small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Simply put, through projects such as the Elizabeth line and Piccadilly line, Siemens Mobility has been able to further invest in the technology, people, skills and supply chain in the UK—just as our competitors and partners across the industry have.

### Using technology to level up

With 200 people in R&D at our Chippenham office alone, it will come as no surprise that I support home-grown advances in technology.

As an industry we're getting better at taking different approaches, for example European Train Control System contracts such as the transformational East Coast Digital Programme or taking a modular approach on 'quieter', more rural routes.

What does this have to do with levelling up? By creating best value-for-money options the industry can do more for less, which means more investment available in areas where it is needed most.

Let's look at an example on the North Wales coast resignalling programme. The digital signalling systems were designed in Newport and Chippenham, manufactured and tested against various scenarios in Chippenham



before being plugged into the live railway environment from Holyhead to Crewe supporting better, reliable connections for the local communities on the line. Standardised designs, adapted for local conditions, as well as lightweight structures and hangar-testing, meant the project was delivered for less than the cost of a traditional signalling scheme.

This approach is being used on the Northumberland line too, where one of Beeching's lines will be reopened to passengers, stimulating economic growth along the route. This time the teams in York and Chippenham are working together, supporting local skills and jobs.

With more projects like this, and by using innovative technology, we can transform lines and passenger journeys up and down the country quickly and cost effectively, making reliable public transport easier to access for more people. Best of all, the solution is designed and manufactured in Britain supporting local jobs and skills for the future.

What we, and most of us across the industry, would like to see now is even more focus on local value creation in contracts which will support existing R&D, manufacturing facilities and justify further investment.

### It's about more than tech

Investing in UK business is crucial, including in supply chains. Working with SMEs brings benefits that go way beyond the remit of clients. The surety of a rising work bank means that these SMEs can, in turn, grow their businesses, investing in their people and bringing a real impact to the local economy.

Graffica is an SME based in Malvern, with a good track record in the aviation industry. Since meeting them four years ago, we have partnered to use Graffica's simulation models with our software to resolve some of the thorniest problems on the rail network, including reducing congestion and capacity issues.

Today, Graffica is planning to move to a new, larger purpose-built building in Malvern during 2022, to enable it to meet increased demand for its services.

### Skills fit for the future

To level up we need to narrow the skills gap, creating opportunities for more people to enter our industry. Facilities such as the National Training Academy for Rail (NTAR) in Northampton can help do this. Part of a joint drive between Siemens Mobility, industry and Government to create a training academy that will build a highly-skilled workforce for the future. Trainees benefit from a hands-on learning environment, giving them skills to help them thrive.

This desire for knowledge can be fostered early on, for example by visiting schools on an informal basis, as we do across the UK, from Scotland to the English south coast, and using formal partnerships.

Through the industry pulling together and making more of interactions with schools, we can help improve the attractiveness of our industry to the bright future rail leaders-to-be.

### Transformational projects can support levelling up

We need to keep passengers and freight users front and centre when planning schemes. For passengers in particular we can level up 'transport poverty', with public transport needing to be in reach, both physically as well as easy to plan and navigate, for everyone, regardless of where they live or their particular circumstances.

To support levelling up we need to deliver more for less, and deliver it more quickly. Whether using smarter digital technologies or using scaled back, simplified solutions.

The industry needs to look beyond supporting big cities, and instead needs to ensure value is delivered more widely. Both within local communities, providing support and investment in areas that need it most and within the wider UK. This can be achieved through working with SMEs so investment doesn't stop with the large corporates, but supports industry and economic growth.

Above all, we need stability. We need stable investment in transport so we can deliver for the benefit of the wider UK economy and society. That steady investment will give new and smaller companies the opportunities to succeed. It will allow the larger companies the security to grow and support their workforce and communities in which they serve.

To level up I believe we need investment. We've proven that using clever technologies and taking a wider approach to transport needs can deliver. We need to maintain momentum and stay focused on the needs of passengers, freight and the wider socio-economic need for the UK. I for one am excited for what the future holds.



**Ben Still**  
Chief Executive, West Yorkshire  
Combined Authority

Ben has led the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) since February 2016. He was instrumental in the agreement of the £1.8bn 2020 West Yorkshire Devolution Deal that led to the Mayoral elections in 2021. He has overseen the delivery of the 2015–2021 Economic Growth deal, which met all of its output targets with an economic benefit return of 5 to 1.

Ben has a background in transport and economic development, policy making and delivery from the public and the private sectors, including a decade in central government, consultancy and local government. He has a deep understanding of West Yorkshire's diverse agenda and brings a wealth of experience from working in both public and private sectors.

## ENSURING WEST YORKSHIRE LINKS INTO HS2 IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR FUTURE

Committed rail investment into West Yorkshire is higher now than it has been for decades. The multi-billion pound Trans Pennine Route (TRU) upgrade is a massive investment, to help modernise a creaking Victorian railway into something fit for the present day. There is also the promise of electrification of the Calder Valley line from Leeds to Bradford, and improvements to the East Coast Main Line.

But despite these welcome investment promises, there is no hiding from the fact that in West Yorkshire we were disappointed when the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) was finally published in November last year. Despite our best efforts to persuade, it fell short of fulfilling the new-line aspirations that we and our partners across the North had worked on over many years, with full support from the Government and Transport for the North. These new lines would have connected Bradford, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, Hull, Newcastle, York and Leeds (to name but a few) with a railway for the future, and with transformational uplifts in capacity and reductions in journey times.

Instead, the IRP leaves unanswered questions about the future of the rail network in the North, in particular questions regarding the expansion of Leeds station, which is rapidly being recognised as the national rail bottleneck for which there is no solution.

The Government has pledged funding to look at two aspects of this challenge. The first is how to get HS2 trains (from where the planned HS2 line ends in the Midlands) up to Leeds. The second is whether mass transit solutions in West Yorkshire can alleviate pressure on the station.

While these are important questions, they fall into the trap of trying to see rail planning as a series of discrete problems, with individual bespoke solutions. In fact, planning the enhancement programme to cater for the future rail growth of a station as important as Leeds needs to be holistic, based on a realistic assessment of the future demand, and with a clear vision and strategy.

We are urging the Government to consider such an integrated approach in its plans for Leeds. Indeed, we have been striving to do this for several years. This includes considering:

- The needs of the TRU project in terms of access to and from Leeds
- The connections to Bradford and how to ensure Bradford is well connected by main line services in time for the 2025 City of Culture festival
- The passage of HS2 trains to Leeds, as committed to in the IRP
- The full electrification of the Calder Valley line to Halifax and beyond
- Implementation of the Combined Authority's 'Rail Vision' which plans for a re-specification of services around clock-face frequencies based on a hierarchy of cities and towns and their connectivity needs (in other words, a rail network re-focused on the passenger)
- The balancing of fast, semi-fast, stopping and freight services—each of which has a discrete role in the West Yorkshire network, and which meet a range of passenger needs





- Not undertaking investments which inhibit the future opportunity for improvement—in particular, nothing that rules out a new line between Manchester and Leeds via Bradford, OR the eventual build of new lines to Leeds.

We feel any study of Leeds needs to look in the round at how capacity can be provided for services approaching from all directions, and consider the full range of capacity providing solutions—including the ‘T-shaped’ station expansion that was envisaged under HS2.

Our vision for West Yorkshire is to be recognised globally as a place with a strong, successful economy, whereby everyone can build great businesses, careers and lives supported by a superb environment and world-class infrastructure.

The reason that rail improvements are so important is because of the vital role rail plays in sustainable economic growth, helping widen labour markets, improving agglomeration and increasing land values.

To help West Yorkshire work more effectively and productively alongside our neighbouring authorities as well as building a stronger northern economy, the North requires frequent, faster, more efficient, reliable, and sustainable journeys to our neighbouring regions.

Our current slow connections are replicated across the North and need addressing as a matter of urgency. This will help deliver on the ‘Levelling Up’ agenda and more importantly enable people to get out of their cars and freight off our roads, in order to make a positive contribution to progress towards a net zero carbon economy and an improvement in air quality. Built as new lines, HS2 and NPR would have enabled faster and more frequent

connections between Northern cities, with the former having provided an attractive alternative for the 41,600 commuters who travel on the M1 between Leeds and Sheffield. Critically, they would have left ‘breathing space’ on the existing rail lines for improved local and freight services, as well as better reliability.

It has now been over eight months since the IRP was published and the Government committed to the IRP ‘study’. As I write, we have still not seen the terms of reference for the study and therefore have no clear idea of the scope or potential route options. We can only hope that the study is launched with the full involvement of local and regional partners and a commitment to developing a solution that can be owned by both central and local government.

Arguably, it is only because West Yorkshire leaders set their rail aspirations high and developed such a strong strategic business case, that the resulting investments in TRU and the wider network were prioritised at all. Rail investments take many years to implement and have to last for generations, so we will continue to make the case for new rail lines and an integrated approach to rail investment planning for the future citizens of West Yorkshire.

In the meantime, we are getting on with improvements to the local rail network. Work has begun on a new station at White Rose, between Cottingley and Morley and we’re developing plans for stations at Elland, Thorpe Park and a parkway station for Leeds Bradford Airport. We are also working with Northern Rail to improve access and inclusivity at stations using funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, as well as working with district partners to deliver improvements at Leeds, Halifax and Bradford.





**Councillor Huw Thomas**  
Leader, Cardiff Council

Huw is the Leader of Cardiff Council, a position he has held since May 2017. As Leader of one of the fastest growing cities in the UK, Huw's administration is committed to promoting inclusive growth, with major projects including a £300m school building programme, the construction of 1000 Council houses by 2022, significant transport infrastructure developments, and the delivery of a new 15,000 capacity indoor arena.

Huw has served as a Labour Councillor for the Splott ward in Cardiff since 2012 and held a number of Cabinet roles before becoming Leader. He is a member of the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet and Economic Growth Partnership. In addition, he chairs the Cardiff Public Services Board and is a director of Millennium Stadium Plc.

## AN X-SHAPED HIGH SPEED RAIL NETWORK IS NEEDED TO LEVEL UP WALES

The levelling up agenda rightly recognises the need to rebalance a fractured UK economy. This should not be about transferring economic power from one region to another. Rather, it must be about maximising the economic potential of every city region within the UK—after all, 61% of the UK's growth is generated by city regions.<sup>1</sup> As the Council Leader for the capital city of Wales, I am in no doubt that if we are to fully leverage the economic potential of city regions, then a focus on strategic transport projects is a prerequisite for success.

Consider the economic benefits of improving transport connectivity across South Wales, not only bringing the city regions of Cardiff and Swansea closer together, but also better connecting Wales with the West of England. Despite a relatively modest land mass, this “western corridor” contributes 6% of the UK's total economy every year with a GVA per head markedly higher in 2019 than in either the Northern Powerhouse or Midlands Engine. Despite this, productivity is lower than the national average. A recent independent economic review estimated that if this gap could be reduced by just 50%, we could deliver a £34 billion boost to the economy, and improved connectivity is vital if we are to achieve this.

It is vital, therefore, that we better connect the national transport system to raise productivity, unlock housing growth and support a transition to a ‘net zero’ future. This would also ensure everyone can better access the centres of employment, high-quality education and the cultural institutions offered by economic powerhouses across the UK.

This was one of the factors that drove cities in South Wales and England's South West to form the Western Gateway as a powerhouse for the West—recognising the natural economic links that already exist across the corridor and the opportunity for growth this presents, but also keenly aware that central Government infrastructure investment has not kept pace with other parts of the country (£400 per head less than in the Northern Powerhouse over an 8 year period).<sup>2</sup>

### Getting back on track: rail investment in Wales

Securing new rail capacity is now crucial. In the case of South Wales, Cardiff is both a regional centre and a capital city which requires connectivity on the scale of London, Edinburgh, and Belfast, as well as other major UK cities. The parallel M4 corridor has also, for many years, been identified as a constraint on the development of the economy of South Wales. Alongside a historic trend where rail investment in Wales is running at no more than 75% of that in England, the case for investment is clear. For South Wales it is not whether a new rail link is desirable, but what form it should take and what should the route be.

On the basis of current investment in the associated rail network, e.g. the Core Valley Lines programme, the main spine of the Great Western Main Line (GWML) will become constrained by capacity limitations. There is finite rail capacity at key locations on the main route through South Wales, including at Newport, Bridgend, Cardiff West junction, the Severn Tunnel and at locations further afield such as at Bristol Parkway, and on the approaches to London where capacity is

1. Calculated by Centre for Cities, 2014; refers to the 56 largest Primary Urban Areas in the UK

2. [A Powerhouse for the West](#), Metro—Dynamics, July 2019 ([western-gateway.co.uk](https://western-gateway.co.uk))



shared with local trains and a complex freight service offer. This restricts the capability of the Great Western Main Line to cater for long term growth in rail travel above pre-covid levels. Solutions to remove these limitations would be both costly and highly disruptive if built around the existing operational network.

The solution

Unlocking the capacity of the transport system from east to west across south Wales, and significantly improving journey times to strategic locations across Wales and England, will require a more strategic approach. Improvements to the existing network would not deliver the same step change in connectivity given its complex and ‘mixed traffic’ nature.

Two options appear to be possible. Firstly, a high speed iteration of the existing Great Western Main Line following the same corridor and linking to HS2 at Old Oak Common. A more radical second option is to run north-east to link to the planned HS2 network in the Birmingham area, with interchange available at the Birmingham Interchange station for destinations further north and to London.

Is this the opportunity to be seized?

Connectivity across the M4 corridor linking South Wales to London will always be a strategic imperative. However, a new link towards Birmingham—even if not operating at full HS2 speeds—would deal with a known capacity limited corridor (urban train services in Bristol and Birmingham and high levels of growth in locations such as Cheltenham and Gloucester). This would enable South Wales to be linked more effectively to the Midlands and also allow access to the northern sections of HS2 and the proposed Integrated Rail Plan investments.

The connection to HS2 northwards opens up opportunities for better links to North Wales through the proposed Crewe ‘hub’, which is a genuine option for ‘Levelling Up’. This would also give an alternative route to London via HS2, without the capacity and speed limitations expected to remain in the Thames Valley.

However, delivering such a programme of rail investment in Wales would frankly require a transformation in the attitudes of policy makers in Whitehall. The UK Government’s decision to scrap the electrification of the Great Western Main Line, West of Cardiff still rankles with many. Meanwhile the Treasury’s insistence that HS2 is an ‘England and Wales’ project, despite the obvious economic disbenefits to most of Wales, sees the Welsh Government missing out on approximately £5 billion of funding for rail infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> An X-shaped high speed rail network which properly connects the Cardiff City Region to other UK regions and nations is exactly the sort of ambitious vision for the future rail network that we need—but the promise of jam tomorrow does little to address the desperate requirement for investment today.

3. [Wales gets a committee but not its £5bn share of HS2 funding, Wales Online](#)







**Craig Munro**  
Rail Client Account Director, Jacobs

Craig is Jacobs' Client Account Director for Rail in the UK & Ireland, with a longstanding focus on High Speed Two.

He has held a variety of roles within the infrastructure sector and in recent years has emerged as a business development leader in rail.

Coming from a small island community in the Outer Hebrides, Craig is a firm believer in the power of major infrastructure investment as a primary enabler for social mobility and economic growth. Relocating from London to Birmingham in 2017, he has seen first-hand how the creation of high value job opportunities away from London, on projects such as HS2, can offer an alternative to living in London, without sacrificing career prospects.

## RAIL'S ROLE IN IMPROVING LIVEABILITY AND WELLBEING

The rail industry offers significant potential as a catalyst for furthering levelling up outcomes. As a purpose-led company, at Jacobs we know we have a pivotal role to play in creating a fairer society through the Government's Levelling Up agenda.

### Putting passengers first

To become a truly customer and passenger-focused industry, we must understand the needs of passengers and communities, both now and in 30 years' time. We can then design and deliver future-proofed transport solutions to meet their current and future needs. To do this, we must work collaboratively with local leaders and communities, listening, learning, and understanding the issues they face. We can then embed solutions with and for local communities, drawing upon their wisdom and skills to build trust throughout project delivery and beyond.

How passengers use rail depends on their occupation and whether they live in rural or urban landscapes. Due to the pandemic, rail use patterns have drastically shifted across the UK, from a primary mode of commuting to a facilitator of leisure and tourism. Despite this, passengers across the country still value cost effectiveness, increased reliability, accessibility, and connectivity to other forms of transport and services. There is significant potential for the rail industry to drive forward levelling up outcomes, aligning with shifts in usage, if infrastructure is designed with the wants and needs of passengers in mind.

### Community connectivity

Journeys rarely begin and end in the railway station. The role rail plays in connecting people to other forms of transport, including active transportation, must be considered. More

attention to whole journeys and the diverse needs of customers in this total end-to-end transport system is needed from the start. Greater consideration for no-build solutions and other minor interventions can make more effective use of the existing infrastructure, such as building cycle paths adjacent to lines.

Ensuring towns and villages have good all-day services to those major cities is a key factor in retaining people in those settlements and attracting new investment and people to them. Such investment brings economic empowerment through employment and training opportunities, increasing productivity, raising living standards and building greater local pride. Through PlanBeyondSM 2.0, our sustainable business approach, we focus on integrating social value and equity considerations and innovations into the solutions we deliver for our clients.

There are some 200 Grade I and II listed railway stations in the country and many others that are iconic within their local setting. Enhancing stations, which are a key gateway into many towns and communities, and the public realm around them is an easy way to raise local esteem and pride. Rail community groups adopting so many stations are testament to this. Our work on the value of stations has highlighted this, as well as the potential for community and commercial use in redundant spaces. Many examples, such as Hartlepool, illustrate where railway corridors were barriers in town centres, with easy access to the station only being from one side of the town. A relatively simple change to improve connectivity is to ensure access to stations is equally good from both sides of the line.



Business case investment

Our support of business case development for major investment programmes such as Northern Powerhouse Rail, the TransPennine Route Upgrade Programme and East West Rail demonstrates how rail contributes to improved living standards by increasing productivity and connectivity. Rail has supported the benefits of agglomeration across towns and cities through increased connectivity and enabling further productivity. In recent years, the growth of the service sector in our major urban landscapes has been largely driven by the rail sector. The National Infrastructure Commission found that rail provided more than 25% of people capacity into medium and large cities and was key for providing additional capacity. Rail delivers increasing numbers of workers based in our city centres at a time of general inability to increase road capacity in urban areas.

Jacobs’ work on future commuting and business travel patterns highlighted the increasing trend towards home working. Surveys from employers and employees who commute by rail revealed people were expected to work an extra one–two days a week from home compared to pre-Covid. The surveys also identified that the less regularly people travelled into their place of employment, the further they were prepared to live from their place of work, and that people are more likely to use rail for longer commutes than other modes of transport. Therefore, rail will remain key to supporting our high-value city centre-based economic activities, as well as transition into new patterns of usage. There is a major opportunity for rail to support the increased interest in people moving to smaller towns with their perceived higher quality of life, while

remaining within commuting distance of large cities. The pandemic saw increased spending in many commuter towns as people spent more money locally.

Understanding changing usage patterns, as well as community and passenger demographics and needs, is key to ensuring the rail industry is responsive to communities and passengers. Future Needs Assessments (FNAs) help decision makers understand current and future usage patterns and demographic data. FNAs should be used as a prerequisite for investment decisions to ensure infrastructure longevity and useability, as well as a tool for the industry to demonstrate sustained responsiveness and accountability to communities and passengers.

Conclusions

The future of the rail industry has great potential to advance efforts towards achieving levelling up outcomes. However, it is imperative that efforts and ambitions are progressively interlinked across timeframes to ensure that outcomes are maximised and achieved efficiently. Further enablers to improvement include:

- 1. Truly understanding the needs of passengers and communities, both now and in 30 years’ time
- 2. Ensuring communities that are not directly served by rail still have good access to the rail network through multimodal solutions, including ticketing



- 3. Enabling local decision makers to work with and for communities and passengers, using local knowledge and drawing upon the skill sets required, would allow community and passenger voices to be heard. These conversations can then produce meaningful outcomes that meet their wants and needs
- 4. Align with the latest HM Treasury Green Book to ensure that appraisals of investments in the rail network, stations and services fully capture the social value associated with them, providing a truly holistic approach to evaluating the impacts and their contributions to levelling up outcomes
- 5. Wider use of Distributional Impact Appraisal and use of GIS solutions to overlay socio-economic data against appraisal data to ensure the wants and needs of communities are understood, as well as having vision on changing demographics moving forwards.





HIGH SPEED  
RAIL GROUP

