

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

8 JULY 2011

CONSULTATION ON HIGH SPEED RAIL 2

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Corporate Director Business & Environmental Services of government proposals for High Speed Rail and seek approval for a county council response to DfT consultation paper 'High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future'.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The first high speed line in the UK was built from London St Pancras station to the Channel Tunnel at Folkestone, providing a fixed rail link between the UK and the rail networks of continental Europe. This is known as High Speed 1, or HS1. Many European countries now have high speed routes, and these are expanding. The UK is among the last of Western European nations not to have an internal high speed network.
- 2.2 At present top speeds on existing lines in Great Britain are 125 mph (200 kmph); on purpose built high speed routes they are 186 mph (300 kmph), and by 2020 it is envisaged that maximum speeds on high speed lines will be 250 mph (400kmph). It is not currently thought that speeds higher than this would be economically viable.
- 2.3 High speed routes have fewer curves and fewer stations than conventional routes, so as to allow high speeds to be realised. It is therefore not always possible to build them alongside existing railways or roads to minimise the environmental impact; although wherever possible, such alignments are considered. With limited rail station halts, it is not anticipated that a rail station in North Yorkshire would be built, however proposals for an East Leeds Parkway station would bring much of the county within a 40 minute drive of the line.
- 2.4 If approved, the UK high speed network will be built to European loading gauge standards; i.e. it will be designed to accommodate the higher and wider continental trains. This would allow direct trains to operate between Continental Europe and the UK north of London.
- 2.5 DfT have launched a consultation on HS2 with the publication of 'High Speed Rail – Investing in Britain's Future'. The closing date for responses to the consultation is 29 July 2011.

3.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR HS2

- 3.1 The Government has accepted that a 'Y' shaped route is the most appropriate, going from London to the West Midlands initially, and then splitting with one line going to the North East and the other to the North West.
- 3.2 Whilst there is an aspiration for high speed lines to extend to Edinburgh and Glasgow, at present, HS2 proposals are for new lines to Birmingham and Manchester / Leeds only, with connection to existing east coast and west coast main lines for onward travel.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the delivery of high speed rail is phased to best manage the parliamentary processes, financial burden and the construction of a major infrastructure scheme. Phase 1 to west midlands is anticipated to commence in 2017 and would be operational by 2026 with the Manchester and Leeds phase opening by 2032/33
- 3.4 The proposals set out further expansions for HSR with a spur to Heathrow and through connection with HS1 to allow direct services from the north of England to continental Europe. It is proposed that the connection for HS2 with HS1 be progressed as part of the initial phase, with the Heathrow Spur being developed once the full Y network is in place
- 3.5 There is a growing debate with justification for and against the investment being made by pro and anti HS rail campaigns. For the Government there is broad cross party support, led by the Transport Secretary Philip Hammond. For the anti lobby there are a number of groups including 'stophs2.org' and 51m.co.uk.
- 3.6 The principle arguments for HS2 are:
- It has a positive cost : benefit ratio of 2.6:1 this places it in the 'high' benefit category
 - It is necessary in order to increase capacity to meet projected future demand
 - It is necessary for Britain's economy to allow Britain's major cities to compete effectively in international markets
 - It is beneficial for the English Regions as it can play an important role in supporting sustainable growth and reducing regional economic disparities
- 3.7 The main opposition to HS2 is:
- There is no business case to support the investment
 - There is no environmental case to support the investment
 - It is not affordable and
 - lower cost enhancements to conventional rail networks will deliver greater benefit value

4.0 THE CASE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE

- 4.1 It is predicted that growth in passenger numbers over the next 25 years on existing West Coast , East Coast and Midland Main Lines will lead to unprecedented levels of over crowding, worsening reliability and poorer travel experience. It is projected that on the West Coast route by 2024 the line will be at full capacity and on the East Coast specific routes including London to Sheffield and Leeds, growth exceeding 70% will occur. A new HS rail network will significantly increase capacity between the region and London with 14 trains per hour able to carry up to 1100 passengers. Relieving this congestion and improving reliability will be of benefit to passengers from North Yorkshire.
- 4.2 The Government believes that high speed rail can play an important role in supporting sustainable long-term economic growth and reducing regional disparities. It is projected that the first phase of HS2 would generate 40,000 jobs and connections to the northern cities will act as a stimulus for regeneration, bringing valuable markets closer to the Yorkshire Region. A Leeds parkway station at Micklefield for example will bring development land at Burn Airfield to within 30 minutes of the HS rail network and could act as a catalyst for new business.
- 4.3 As noted above HS rail provides for much faster journey times, and these will be of benefit to North Yorkshire. A Leeds Station stop would be within 80 minutes of London reducing the current travel time by 1 hour, and to Birmingham a journey time of 60 minutes cuts the current travel time by half.
- 4.4 Additional capacity out of London provided by HS2 will free up capacity on the East Coast and West Coast Main Lines. This will provide the opportunity for additional and new direct intercity services from parts of North Yorkshire to London, eg Harrogate to London and Scarborough to London.

5.0 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- 5.1 Whilst development of HS2 has the potential to enhance the economy of the region its benefits will not be realised for over 25 years. It is important that we continue to press for improvements and investment to the East Coast Main Line and in local transpennine services which are necessary for the region now.
- 5.2 It should be recognised that any benefits for North Yorkshire will only be available if High Speed rail is actually delivered. There is a notable and growing voice amongst southern counties and some environmental groups that is opposed to the project; were we to support the proposed HS2 we should do so 'on the record'

5.3 Access to the High Speed Rail network will be a key factor in determining the value that North Yorkshire receives from the development. It is not possible for there to be a station halt in the county so we should press for a Yorkshire station that is proximate to and accessible for as much of North Yorkshire as possible, and from where good road and conventional rail links are present.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 HS2 would reduce journey times from North Yorkshire to London and to the West Midlands by up to 1 hr

6.2 HS2 would increase capacity thus reducing projected over crowding on intercity routes

6.3 HS2 will release train paths into London on the East Coast Mainline, which can mean direct trains to London are possible from the main North Yorkshire towns

6.4 A station at Leeds will support North Yorkshire economy and enable businesses be competitive in national and European markets

7.0 RECOMMENTATIONS

7.1 That the Executive Members note the report.

7.2 That the County Council response to consultation as set out in appendix 1 is approved and submitted.

DAVID BOWE
Corporate Director

Background documents: None

Author of Report: John Laking

Response to the DfT consultation questions

Questions 1-3 relate to part 1 of the consultation document

Q.1 Do you agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network to support economic growth over the coming decades?

A.1 Based on the evidence supplied in the consultation document, the case appears to be very strong. Without significant investment in the nation's transport infrastructure, the UK will no be able to compete with other countries that are making this type of investment. Our future prosperity depends on it.

Q.2 Do you agree that the national high speed rail network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money option (best balance of costs and benefits) for enhancing rail capacity and performance?

A.2 Yes. Again, based on the information provided, this appears to be the best value for money option; a benefit:cost ratio of 2.6 is very good.

Q.3 Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the phased roll-out of a national high speed rail network, and for links to Heathrow Airport and the HS1 line to the Channel Tunnel?

A.3 A link from Yorkshire to Heathrow Airport would be most beneficial, given that there are now no longer any air services between Leeds/Bradford Airport and Heathrow (or Gatwick). The present rail or road journey to Heathrow is slow and challenging; and high-speed rail link would be an enormous boost – even if air services were ever restored.

A link to HS1 would provide either direct rail services between Yorkshire and major European cities or connections at Stratford or Ebbsfleet.

Questions 4 – 7 relate to part 2 of the consultation document which are about the London to West Midlands section of the route

Q.4 Do you agree with the principles and specification used by HS2 Ltd to underpin its proposals for new high speed rail lines and the route selection process that HS2 Ltd undertook?

A.4 This is less relevant to North Yorkshire, but the principles adopted appear to be sound; if the same principles are applied to the extension to the North East, we would be happy with them.

Q.5 Do you agree that the Government's proposed route, including the approach proposed for mitigating its impacts, is the best option for a new high speed rail line between London and the West Midlands?

A.5 Yes, we agree. If this approach is used in Yorkshire, we would be happy with that.

Q.6 Do you wish to comment on the Appraisal of Sustainability of the Government's proposed route between London and the West Midlands that has been published in this consultation?

A.6 It appears to be quite satisfactory.

Q.7 Do you agree with the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value as a result of any new high speed line?

A.7 It is extremely difficult to find a solution to this problem that will satisfy everybody. However, the proposals do appear to be as fair as can be reasonably expected.

Additional comments from NYCC, not addressed in the answers to the consultation questions.

1. The timescale for reaching the West Midlands (2025/6) and the North East and North West (2032/3) seem inordinately long. Is there any way that this could be done more quickly?

2. We would like to see the lines to the North East and North West open at the same time, so as not to give one region any economic advantage over the other.

3. The fact that high speed trains to Yorkshire will use the new line would release some paths to/from London Kings Cross station currently used by services to Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh. These paths could then be used by trains to serve other places that currently do not have direct London services.

In North Yorkshire we would like to see more direct services to Harrogate, and the introduction of direct services to/from Scarborough. Depending on the design of the forthcoming IEP (electric only, bi-mode or both; and length of unit), it may be possible to operate (say) two 5-car sets from London to York where they would divide, with one going to Harrogate and the other to Scarborough. These would use electric traction to York and diesel thereafter.