

# North Cheshire Rail Users' Group



**Monitoring rail services  
from Chester & Ellesmere Port  
via Helsby, Frodsham & Runcorn  
to Liverpool & Manchester**

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Please reply to: 24 Caldys Road, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 2HG  
[content redacted]

## **NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION Call for evidence**

NCRUG are pleased to have been given the opportunity to submit their comments against the above.

The consultation stresses the need to connect northern cities. Whilst this is obvious and necessary it does not mention the need to focus transport infrastructure as a means for connecting the population and industry in the north which may not always be in cities. For instance, the Hooton to Helsby line does not connect northern cities but crosses a number of administrative boundaries. With an enhanced service and modest investment it could connect people with employment and students with tuition, e.g. the Encircle factory and the new Chester University Technical Faculty at Ince and Stanlow respectively.

The Wrexham/Bidston rail corridor epitomises the need for investment and service enhancements which would enable workers to reach employment by rail and connect communities along its length with city regions in the north of England and the U.K. An enhanced service and modest new station investment, together with a re-instated Halton curve, (planned to open in 2018), would make a huge improvement in connectivity within the whole Wrexham, South Wirral, North Wales, North Cheshire and Merseyside area.

NCRUG believe that the above two projects alone would significantly benefit the communities in which they are situated and assist the development of the economic and social synergies which exist between Liverpool City Region, north east Wales and North Wales tourism and employment.

## **Response to the five specific questions**

### **1) To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?**

- NCRUG recognise that industry, such as that located in south Liverpool and Deeside Industrial Park, are unable to recruit those who cannot easily reach it. For instance, we understand employers at Deeside have stated that potential employees are being denied to them as they cannot access the site by public transport and are unable or unwilling to drive from where they live.
- Across the UK many people are forced to buy a car to reach their employment and, for young people in particular, the cost of running a car can take a significant element of their salary. Such car usage is also contributing to congestion on the road network.

- People living in areas poorly served by public transport, who are unable or unwilling to buy a car, limit their employment opportunities and may not realise their potential.
- The poor service frequency on the Wrexham/Bidston line, the absence of a station serving the Deeside Industrial Park and lack of effective connections with other services at Shotton and Wrexham means that the Wrexham/ Bidston Line significantly underperforms its potential in providing transport connectivity for the wider region to support jobs, enterprise creation and growth and housing. Assuming the Halton curve re-instatement proceeds, as planned, then many more travel opportunities will become available within the area.

**2) What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.**

- This should not be just city-to-city connectivity; it should address journey needs; specifically where people need to travel from and to.
- Improved frequency, increased capacity and reduced journey times between residential areas /employment locations by public transport will result in a modal shift from private cars and help to reduce road congestion.
- For the Wrexham/Bidston rail corridor a modest infrastructure investment, with a new station to serve the Deeside Industrial Park, will allow a reliable two trains an hour service on the route to connect workers with their employment. Capacity improvements on the North Wales Main Line will enable more trains to call at Shotton to connect the Wrexham/Bidston rail corridor and realise enhanced connectivity with northern England and beyond to the benefit of both population and industry. Again Halton curve re-instatement will aid agglomeration within the Wrexham, North Wales and Merseyside.

**3) Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?**

- Transport corridors other than city-to-city must also be considered.
- Priority should be given to those corridors which are constraining economic potential (such as the Wrexham/Bidston and the Hooton/Helsby Lines to enable workers and students, (Chester University Faculty at Stanlow), to access employment, business and tuition.

**4) What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?**

- Effective, quick and easy rail access to airports (and regional and key UK hubs such as Heathrow) is essential and capacity constraints on the rail network will need to be addressed to keep ahead of passenger demand.
- HS2 will, in due course, provide easy connection to Birmingham International and London Heathrow (with an interchange at Old Oak Common). It is essential that through services are run beyond the HS2 route to the likes of Chester and North Wales (which will require electrification of the North Wales

Main Line) in order that connectivity is maintained with locations beyond those on HS2.

- Insofar as the Wrexham/Bidston Line is concerned an effective interchange at Shotton with services to Liverpool South Parkway, Manchester, Birmingham and London will enable the communities along the route of the line easy access to regional and national hub airports and, in due course, to HS2. We understand connectivity enhancement between Liverpool South Parkway and Liverpool Airport are currently under discussion. Satisfactory resolution of this issue will greatly increase the attractiveness of Liverpool Airport for entering or leaving the area, particularly tourism, using the budget airlines for which it is well known.

**5) What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?**

- The approach for infrastructure provision and its funding needs to be hierarchical with the overarching UK strategy at the top with appropriate devolution of responsibility to regional and local levels. This should enable the appropriate and effective delivery infrastructure needs from a national down to local level
- There should be no step change in infrastructure provision over administrative boundaries.
- Funding for infrastructure provision should be prioritised on a national basis regardless of to where responsibility is devolved.

We should be grateful if you would keep us informed on future developments and consultations.

**Cedric Green, 07/01/2016**