

The Leeds- Settle- Carlisle Railway Line

- 1 Summary. The railway line from Leeds to Carlisle ('the Line') through the Yorkshire Dales provides a vital alternative route to Scotland. It was once a main line railway but today is more of a local passenger railway with some through travel to/from Glasgow. It also carries freight and tourist traffic. This Report argues that:
 - a) The Line should be recognized as an alternative to the East and West Coast routes
 - b) It should connect to the HS2 hub at Leeds
 - c) It should be upgraded over time to main line status.
 - d) It should have an enhanced passenger service
 - e) Its impact on local economies should be recognized.
 - f) Freight traffic should be encouraged.
- 2 Description of the Line. The Line runs from the East Coast Main Line at Leeds to Skipton (which is served by fast and frequent commuter services) and then north via Settle through the Yorkshire Dales into Cumbria along the Eden Valley to reach Carlisle where it joins the West Coast Main Line. There are thirteen stations between Skipton and Carlisle serving local communities. The section from Settle- Carlisle is one of the world's most attractive railway lines and is an important tourist destination. The Line also connects with the West Coast Main Line at Lancaster and has the potential to link to Manchester [explain how].
- 3 Background information. The Line was built in the 1870's by the Midland Railway as a third main route from London (St Pancras) to Scotland. Unusually, it had many local stations. It survived the Beeching era cuts (although some local stations closed) but was threatened with closure in the 1980's. A successful campaign was fought to save the Line culminating in a decision in 1989 to keep the line open. Out of this adversity grew what is today the Settle-Carlisle Line Association.
- 4 The Settle Carlisle Line Association (SCLA). The SCLA is the umbrella body for four organisations dedicated to developing and promoting the Line. These are: the Friends

(a membership organization with over 3000 members); the Trust (a charity with educational and heritage objects); the Property Company (which manages long term leases of three stations, holiday cottages and other property); and the Development Company which promotes tourism, supports businesses and provides services such as on-train refreshments. The SCLA works in partnership with Network Rail, Northern Rail (the current franchisee) and other stakeholders. It is a unique partnership model and is well placed to support the further development of the Line.

- 5 Economic benefits. The Line is both a strategic part of the national rail network, and an important contributor to local and regional development. Key factors are:
 - a) An alternative route between England and Scotland for passenger traffic on the East and West Coast Main Lines.
 - b) A link to the Leeds HS2 hub providing access from NW England and Scotland to the HS network.
 - c) The Line is an 'economic corridor' for rural communities between Settle and Carlisle. It provides access to major cities and connectivity between communities.
 - d) It generates tourist traffic, both local and long distance.
 - e) It is a freight pathway and also has originating traffic (quarries, timber etc) thus reducing road traffic.
 - f) It is an important route for rail tours (mainly steam hauled).
- 6 Constraints/ Opportunities. Although built as a main line, over the years it has not been maintained to prevailing standards. Line speed is currently 60mph and some small sections are single track. We understand that Network Rail are upgrading for higher line speeds when they carry out any work on the line. The current passenger timetable, with infrequent services, is not conducive to commuting or achieving good connections at Leeds or Carlisle. A more frequent service would encourage greater usage. The trains used by Northern Rail are very old; hence the customer experience is poor.
- 7 National policy context. The development of the Line is consistent with existing and emerging policy and strategic frameworks eg

- a) HS2: providing direct access to the Leeds hub and hence connectivity for communities towards Carlisle and beyond.
 - b) Northern Powerhouse: linking (mainly) rural communities to the city regions of Leeds/Bradford and Manchester.
 - c) LEP strategies. Supporting emerging strategies eg Cumbria Infrastructure development.
 - d) Network Rail. It is expected that the West Coast Study currently in progress will identify the Line as a diversionary alternative for the West Coast Mainline.
 - e) Enterprise Zones. The Line has the potential to become an economic corridor.
8. Recommendations
- a) Network Rail should recognize the Line as an alternative route to the West and East Coast mainlines.
 - b) Network Rail should over time seek to achieve higher line speeds and increase line capacity while building in resilience to cope with, for example, extreme weather conditions.
 - c) HS2 should recognize the importance of connection to the Leeds hub and the opportunities then presented for improved services towards Carlisle.
 - d) The Department for Transport and Rail North should recognize the benefits of improved services (frequency and train quality) and work with the franchisee to bring about these improvements.
 - e) The Northern Powerhouse should explore the benefits of improved connectivity to Leeds/Bradford and Manchester.
 - f) LEPs and Local Authorities should consider how the Line can contribute to economic growth, especially for rural communities.
 - g) The SCLA and its member organisations will seek to support all these actions and will play its part in developing infrastructure; providing improved customer service; supporting businesses and tourism; developing community hubs.

On behalf of the Settle Carlisle Line Association
 3rd January 2016.

