

## Lancaster City Council | Report Cover Sheet

<b>Meeting</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date</b>	09 June 2020
<b>Title</b>	Launch of 'A Rail Strategy for Lancaster District'		
<b>Report of</b>	Director for Economic Growth and Regeneration		
<b>Purpose of Report</b>			
<p>The purpose of the report is to present the City Council's recently-drafted <i>Rail Strategy for the Lancaster District</i> for formal endorsement.</p> <p>Subject to Cabinet endorsement for the Strategy it was originally envisaged that a formal launch event will be arranged. The nature of this launch event will require further consideration as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this is discussed in the report.</p> <p>The Strategy will be used as a basis for influencing key stakeholders and decision-makers within the rail industry.</p>			
<b>Key Decision (Y/N)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Date of Notice</b>	<b>Exempt (Y/N)</b> <b>N</b>

### Report Summary

Despite the fact that the City Council is not the transport authority for the district, Lancaster City Council has taken the step of developing a Rail Strategy for the District. This allows the Council to publicly set out its position regarding rail transport and establish its' key priorities.

The primary driver was the development of the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) Project and the implications that this will potentially have for existing and proposed service patterns to and from Lancaster Station.

### Recommendations of Councillors

- (1) That the Rail Strategy for Lancaster District is formally endorsed and is used thereafter to positively influence key stakeholders and decision-makers in the rail industry, for the benefit of the district's residents, businesses and other organisations and groups.

### Relationship to Policy Framework

The Council Plan includes ambitions to create strong conditions for growth so that businesses thrive and jobs are created; ensure that growth is good for all; work with partners to drive growth and achieve major investment across the Region; and to use innovation, technology and partnership with other to reduce our impact on the environment. The Council Plan also aims to enhance community cohesion.

The emerging Local Plan for Lancaster District includes a strategic objective (within the Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Document) to capitalise on the accessibility of the district, maximising the opportunities provided by its location on the main strategic rail (and road) network. It also seeks to improve transport connectivity around Morecambe Bay through improvement to rail services at Morecambe and Carnforth.

Policy SP10 (Improving Transport Connectivity) establishes an expectation that there will be greater promotion of a variety of sustainable transport modes. Policy EC5 discusses the potential for improving rail links from Carnforth. Policy T4 reinforces this ambition, by explaining that the Council will work collaboratively to investigate opportunities to improve regional rail linkages from both Morecambe and Carnforth.

The emerging Development Management Development Plan Document Policy DM64 references the Lancaster District Highways and Transport Masterplan, and the ambition to improve rail services.

The proposals accord with the ambitions of the Council Plan and the Local Plan.

**Conclusion of Impact Assessment(s) where applicable**

<b>Climate</b> The increased use of rail within the district has the potential to mitigate against the impacts of climate change. Rail journeys can provide a low carbon alternative to car transportation.	<b>Wellbeing &amp; Social Value</b> By seeking to protect and enhance rail services to and from stations within the Lancaster District, the local authority aims to ensure that there are viable transport alternatives to private vehicular travel.
<b>Digital N/A</b>	<b>Health &amp; Safety N/A</b>
<b>Equality</b> By seeking to protect and enhance rail services to and from stations within the Lancaster District, the local authority aims to ensure that there are viable transport alternatives to private vehicular travel.	<b>Community Safety N/A</b>

**Details of Consultation**

An initial briefing and discussion event regarding the development of a Rail Strategy was held in 2019.

**Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications stemming from this report.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report however failure to endorse this strategy could have a detrimental impact on the local economy. Any future officer time required can be managed from existing resources.

**Other Resource or Risk Implications**

None.

**Section 151 Officer's Comments**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**Monitoring Officer's Comments**

The MO is satisfied that this endorsement of a strategy can fall as a Cabinet function. However, should this strategy form part of the Policy Framework of the Council then its adoption should be taken by Full Council rather than Cabinet.

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#### **Links to Background Papers**

*Draft 'A Rail Strategy for Lancaster District' 2020*

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The transport authority for the Lancaster District is Lancashire County Council. Their remit includes responsibility for the local road network, but they also have a key role to play in terms of public transport, especially as an influencer of important organisations such as Transport for the North and of the rail operators that run services throughout the county.
- 1.2 In addition, the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has a significant responsibility in terms of considering transport needs across the county. This is especially the case in terms of major strategic projects that have the potential to influence economic growth and unlock development opportunities, such as HS2.
- 1.3 Both the County Council and the LEP are supportive of the need for HS2 services to serve its' two largest mainline West Coast railway stations, Preston and Lancaster. Notwithstanding this welcome support, it is considered that the City Council must also be vocal about the importance of HS2 services stopping at Lancaster Station. This is because the current HS2 service patterns show a loss of direct Lancaster-London services once HS2 is introduced. Such a scenario is unacceptable and would detrimentally affect our residents and businesses. It is this issue which has primarily led to the emergence of the first Rail Strategy for the Lancaster District.
- 1.4 For the avoidance of doubt, the Strategy is not part of the formal Development Plan. However it is considered to have an important role to play in formally establishing the position of the City Council, and by setting out how it intends to use the document to influence future decision-making.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 The draft Rail Strategy document is appended to this report, and can be summarised as follows:
- It sets out the existing position regarding service provision, noting that Lancaster is currently well-served by longer-distance trains (e.g. to London, Scotland and Birmingham). It also recognises the importance of regional rail services within the district, acknowledging that service provision is not always reliable and that journey speeds are notably lower.

- It establishes our priorities regarding long-distance rail services. This is especially important given that the current HS2 business case envisages a reduction of direct services from Lancaster to London. The potential economic impacts of this loss of services are discussed in the Strategy. The document sets out the City Council's position that it will seek every opportunity to advance the case for a better outcome for HS2 services to and from Lancaster.
- It also sets out the Council's position with regard to regional and local rail services. In doing so, it envisages supporting the case for improved Leeds-bound services from Lancaster via Carnforth and Wennington; for an improved and evenly-spaced service to Manchester and Manchester Airport; a more regular service between Morecambe and Lancaster; and an increase in the number of services to/from Liverpool.
- It discusses the potential of the Eden Project in Morecambe, and the need to deliver a reliable passenger service from Lancaster (and potentially other stations) to the town. It raises the possibility of lobbying for the use of the Lancaster-Morecambe branch line as a possible test bed for battery-operated trains in an attempt to decarbonise this line. As part of the emerging narrative for Morecambe (via the Eden Project and the City Council's Future High Streets proposals), the Rail Strategy discusses the principle of remodelling Morecambe Railway Station as a quality sustainable transport gateway.
- It raises the prospect of working with West Coast Partnership to explore opportunities for enhancing the variety of uses at Lancaster Railway Station and developing a quality interchange experience.
- The Strategy also refers to the potential to expand upon the heritage potential around Carnforth station, including improvements to the Leeds service via Carnforth.
- The Strategy concludes by publishing a list of Rail Strategy Priorities, and by setting out some 'Next Steps'.

2.2 The level of service intervention described in the document has been the subject of modelling analysis by the Council's rail consultants, SLC Rail Limited. The priorities are based upon realistic, but ambitious improvements to local, regional and national rail services.

### 3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

<p><b>Option 1:</b></p>
<p>To endorse the Rail Strategy for Lancaster District</p>
<p><b>Advantages:</b></p>

The Strategy can be used by the City Council, working with the County Council, to advance the case for improved service provision for long-distance trains including HS2 services; improvements to the regional and local services; and improvements to Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth stations.

**Disadvantages:**

There are no recognised disadvantages arising from the endorsement of the Strategy.

**Risks:**

There are no recognised risks arising from the endorsement of the Strategy.

**Option 2:**

Do not endorse the Rail Strategy for Lancaster District

**Advantages:**

None.

**Disadvantages:**

The case being made for HS2 services serving Lancaster would continue to be made by the County Council and the LEP, but without the addition of the local context provided by this Rail Strategy and without the local economic modelling that has been undertaken to inform it. In the absence of this data, HS2 service decisions (in particular) will potentially be made without due consideration of the social and economic implications for the Lancaster District.

**Risks:**

Whilst the failure to endorse the Strategy does not carry direct risk for the City Council, there would be significant financial risks associated with the loss of direct London services to/from Lancaster, which has greater potential to arise as a probable scenario if Lancaster City Council does not formally establish its position and seek to advance its case.

#### 4. Officer Preferred Option

4.1 The officer preferred option is Option 1. This action will enable the City Council to establish its' formal position regarding HS2 and regional and local services, and will lead to Officers working with partners, stakeholders, service providers and Central Government to advance the district's case.

4.2 Whilst it is intended that the priorities listed within the document will remain unaltered, the Strategy may be updated by the inclusion of the most-recent economic data, to help support the district's case.

#### 5. Addendum – Covid-19

5.1 This report was originally due to be presented to Cabinet in March. However that meeting was cancelled due to the escalating Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, the impacts of social distancing measures have temporarily changed the face of public

transportation. Whilst the Rail Strategy is concerned with medium and longer-term outcomes, it is still prudent to consider the impact of the pandemic and of prolonged social distancing upon the transport sector.

5.2 At a national level, there is no indication from Government that projects such as HS2 will be halted. Indeed, projects such as HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail are held as examples of strategic infrastructure proposals that can have a transformative effect upon important economic and social centres. Therefore, it is likely that both projects will continue to receive Government support.

5.3 At the time of writing this addendum Government advice remains that public transport should not be used unless it is essential, in order to observe social distancing and to maintain the railway for those who may need it the most. Current timetables have been increased to a Saturday-level of service across the network since May 18<sup>th</sup>, but rail usage remains very low. Even with social distancing enforced and the possibility of train operators introducing reservation-only trains to control passenger numbers, some passengers will, in the short term, be reluctant to return to rail travel unless there is no alternative travel arrangement. Longer term travel behaviours, in an era where the legacy of the nation's current home-working arrangements may have a significant impact, remain difficult to predict.