

A Rail Strategy for Lancaster District



“Lancaster City Council’s vision is to promote sustainable growth bringing opportunities to improve the quality of life to its residents, help preserve our natural environment, protect our wonderful heritage assets and create vibrant and cohesive communities.”

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Why a Rail Strategy?

This document sets out an agenda for change to maximise the value of the railway to the economy of Lancaster, Morecambe and the wider District, helping to reduce our impact on the environment.

Rail services – their quality, frequency and speed – are vital components in the economic prosperity and sustainability of the area, and are important to the quality of life of our residents. Rail travel from Lancaster has more than doubled in the last twenty years, facilitating the City’s competitiveness and economic advancement, and has been supported by major improvements in long distance services.

Lancaster City Council has taken the step of developing a Rail Strategy as we face unusually significant opportunities and threats over the next few years. Important decisions will be made about service stopping patterns on High Speed 2 (HS2) services, and some options currently show a loss of direct Lancaster-London services after HS2 is introduced.

It is not just about HS2, however. The district’s sustainable development also depends upon improved connectivity to local and regional centres, including Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. The proposed Eden Project in Morecambe will require the delivery of sustainable transport solutions, and rail can help support the regeneration of the town. In Carnforth, the existing station can be a focus for heritage and for the renewal of the town.

In summary, we need a clear set of evidenced priorities for what we want from railway services through the District, and where they should go. This document sets out those priorities.



The Current Position

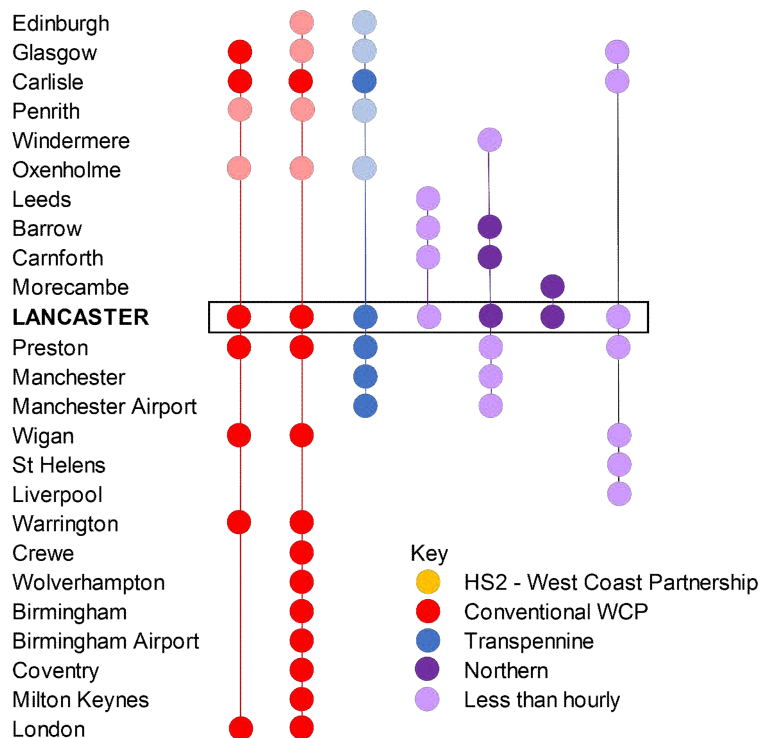
The mid-1990s witnessed a substantial, sustained and continuing growth in passenger rail usage, such that more people now travel by train in the UK than has ever been the case in the history of the railways. The consequence is that the rail industry has responded by running more trains, to more destinations than ever before. There has been a sustained increase in investment which, nevertheless, has often struggled to keep pace with demands. On all railway lines of significance, the railway is running at or near full capacity, and further investment is needed.

Lancaster is no different from this. The most significant enhancement that the rail industry has delivered to support this growth is the investment in the West Coast Main Line in the 1995-2005 period, and the introduction of the inter-city *Very High Frequency* timetable in 2008. Compared to the 1995 timetable, Lancaster has nearly twice as many services to London, and they take 20 minutes less. The city also benefits from direct services to Birmingham International, Coventry and Milton Keynes. There are twice as many services to Scotland, and many more to Manchester. Lancaster's economy has grown in parallel with this, with the success of Lancaster University a significant factor.

By contrast, rail usage at Morecambe has barely grown over the same period, reflecting not just the town's specific economic challenges, but also that the train service is much the same now (and with similar rolling stock) as it was 20 years ago. In fact, in 1995 there were some direct trains between Morecambe and Liverpool, Manchester and Blackpool.

Train services calling at stations in the District are currently provided by three operators: West Coast Partnership (Avanti), Transpennine Express and Northern Rail (now operated by a Government company). The figure opposite shows the services in a typical hour, although individual hours can vary.

CURRENT TYPICAL HOUR



The table below shows that on the West Coast Main Line Lancaster is currently well served and journey speeds are high:

Destination	Typical Journey Time	Frequency	Journey Speed (mph)
London	2 hours 31 mins	1 per hour	91
Coventry	2 hours 22 mins	1 per hour	55
Birmingham	2 hours 13 mins	1 per hour	56
Crewe	60 mins	1 per hour	72
Glasgow	2 hours 5 mins	1 to 2 per hour	82
Edinburgh	2 hours 13 mins	1 to 2 per hour	77

By contrast, Lancaster’s regional links are much slower, as shown below:

Destination	Typical Journey Time	Frequency	Journey Speed (mph)
Manchester	56 mins	2 per hour	56
Manchester Airport	1 hour 15 mins	2 per hour	50
Liverpool	1 hour 4 mins	3 per day	52
Preston	20 mins	4 per hour	63
Wigan	31 mins	3 per hour	70
Barrow-in-Furness	1 hour 3 mins	1 per hour	33
Windermere	40 mins	2 per day	44
Leeds	1 hour 56 mins	7 per day	36
Morecambe	10 mins	1 to 2 per hour	24

The success of the economy of Lancaster District depends on maintaining and improving these regional transport links, as much as getting the right result from HS2 and long distances services.

Our Priorities - Long Distance Services

The future of long distance services through Lancaster on the West Coast Main Line is bound up with HS2. The stated purposes of HS2 are twofold: to provide enough rail capacity to enable long term economic prosperity, and to support the “re-balancing” of Britain. By bringing the main economies of the country closer together through a high speed rail network, the Government expects wealth to be spread more evenly, to the advantage particularly of the north.

The key issue affecting Lancaster is the level of service to be operated by HS2 and by inter-city “classic” trains (those that only use the existing rail network). These two types of services will be planned and operated together by the West Coast Partnership. Current HS2 plans assume that all long distance inter-city trains through Lancaster will be HS2 services, replacing the inter-city “classic” services currently operating between Scotland and London and Birmingham. In all of the service patterns developed by HS2 for use in their business case the Scotland-London services no longer call at Lancaster.

HS2 is currently envisaged to be constructed in phases, with the first phase opening in 2028-2031 and the second phase some seven years later. The service shown in the HS2 business case through Lancaster/Preston is as follows.

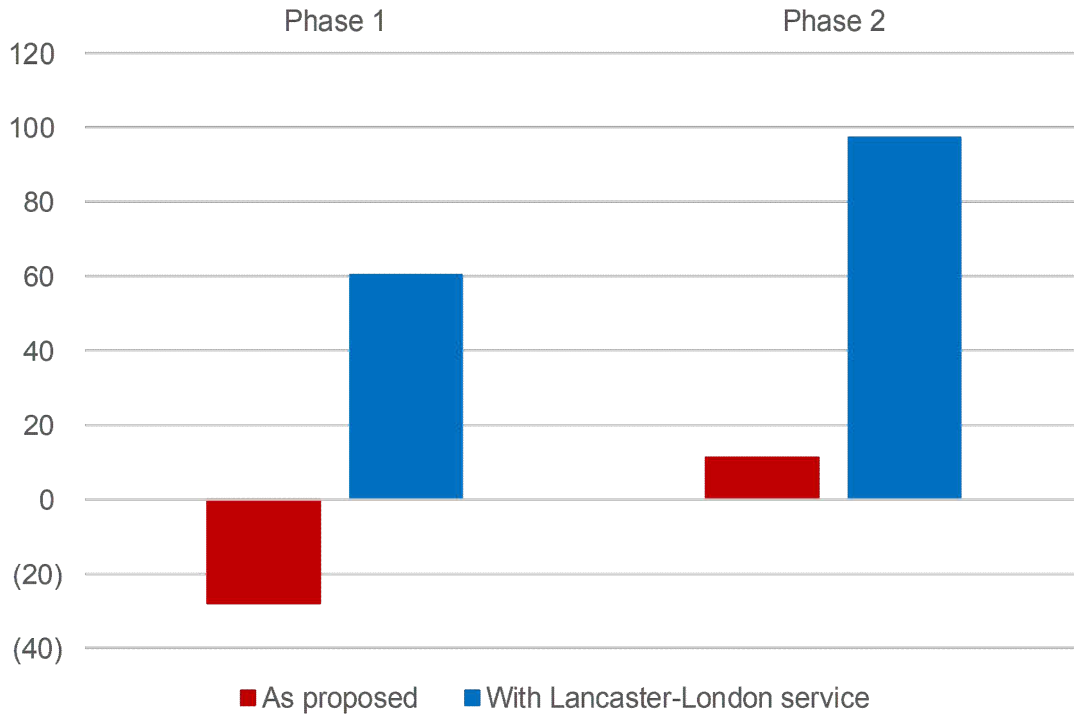
HS2 Phase	Hourly Service	Stops at Lancaster?
Phase 1	Glasgow-London HS2	NO
	Preston-London HS2	NO
	Glasgow/Edinburgh-Birmingham Classic Service	YES
Phase 2	Glasgow/Edinburgh-London HS2	NO
	Glasgow/Edinburgh-London HS2	NO
	Preston-London HS2	NO
	Glasgow/Edinburgh-Birmingham HS2	YES

In some options the service shown in **bold** extends to start from Lancaster.

Any option that takes away the direct service between Lancaster and London is unacceptable. It would adversely affect the District’s economic future and would put at risk the business and professional perception of Lancaster as an important economic and academic centre.

In order to understand the impact of these options, we modelled a number of train service scenarios to establish what effect (negative and positive) they would have on the District's economy. This is measured in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) - a forecast of the change in economic activity resulting from the options tested compared to the current train service.

The graph below shows the results in £m GVA over the appraisal period.



It can be seen that:

- In phase 1 the direct impact on Lancaster's economy of HS2's proposals is a loss of £28m GVA.
- By contrast, providing a service between a HS2 service between Lancaster and London by extending the proposed Preston-London service would increase Lancaster's economy by £60m GVA—a difference between the two positions of £88m.
- In phase 2 the impact on Lancaster's economy of HS2's proposals is a small benefit of £11m GVA. However, this is made up of a loss of £33m resulting from there being no direct trains to London, offset by a gain of £44m from the HS2 Scotland-Birmingham service.
- By contrast, providing an HS2 service by extending the proposed Preston-London train as in phase 1 would increased Lancaster's economy by £97m GVA—a difference between the two positions of £86m.

Therefore, the impact of an hourly direct HS2 London service on the District's economy is £86-88m GVA. Without this boost, not only will Lancaster lose out economically through loss of services, it will also fall behind other towns and cities that will benefit from HS2.

It has been argued by HS2 and others that Lancaster passengers would still benefit from HS2 services to London, even if they have to change at Preston. This is because the journey time would still be faster than it is today (perhaps 120 minutes with a ten minute change at Preston) compared to 150 minutes. However, this is taken into account in the modelling we have carried out. The negative passenger perception associated with having to change trains will remain, and changing onto a long (400 metre) HS2 train at Preston will not be a trivial risk, especially for the infirm or mobility-impaired.

We will seek every opportunity to advance the case for a better result for Lancaster from HS2. Our main ways to do this are through working with Transport for the North, (and Northern Powerhouse Rail), Lancashire County Council in their role as transport authority for the district, and the West Coast Partnership to seek a commitment to London services in the HS2 specification.

West Coast Partnership contract, held by First Trenitalia, is in three parts:

- To operate the current inter-city services until HS2 starts;
- To plan with Government the start-up and shape of the integrated services ("classic" inter-city and HS2); and,
- To operate the integrated services after HS2 opens.

The preparation phase for developing an integrated service runs from 2020 to 2024 with a series of studies in order to determine the shape of the integrated service, including market analysis, train service options and fares options. The contract requires West Coast Partnership to undertake a consultation exercise, leading to submission of a final business plan by 2024, and we will fully engage with this.

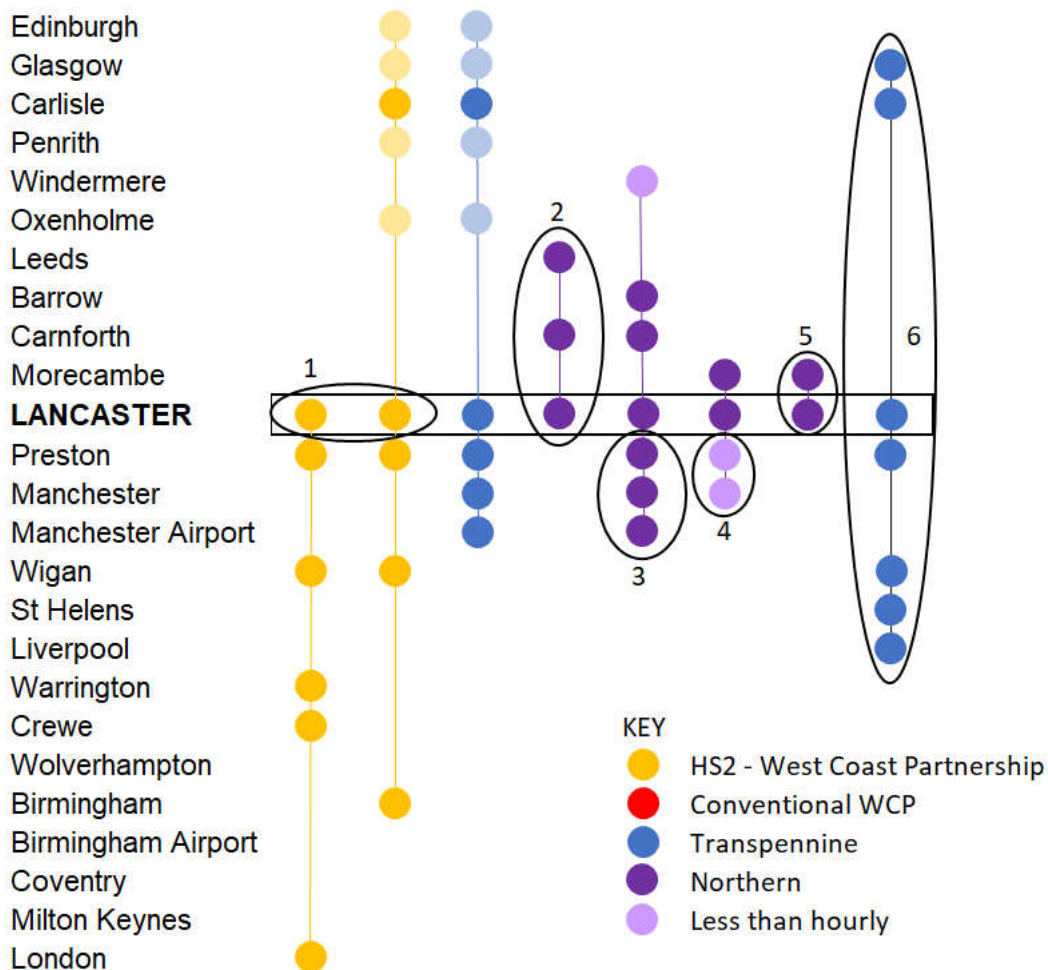
In the business plan, West Coast Partnership may propose different/better solutions for the service pattern than HS2 has assumed.



Our Priorities - Regional and Local Services

For residents and businesses in the City of Lancaster and the towns and villages within the District, their ability to travel by rail easily and quickly to all the key local, regional and national economic centres, is important. We need to see HS2, and the longer distance, regional and local network as an integrated whole. Improving connectivity to Manchester, Liverpool and West Yorkshire are as important as connectivity to London. The table on page 5 shows how the quality of these links varies widely.

We used the same GVA modelling process we used for HS2 services to test a number of options for improved regional and local rail connectivity for the District. The graphic below shows full picture of options tested, and can be compared to the graphic of the current service shown on page 4.



The numbers shown are as follows.

Number	Service Enhancement
1	HS2 services to London, Scotland and Birmingham
2	Hourly fast service to Leeds, with some calling at Wennington
3	Improved evenly spaced service to Manchester and Manchester Airport
4	Four trains per day each way between Morecambe and Manchester, providing peak journey opportunities for Morecambe and off-peak services from Manchester for the Eden Project
5	A regular half-hourly service between Lancaster and Morecambe
6	An increase to hourly of the service between Glasgow and Liverpool

The GVA modelling showed that, other than the HS2 enhancements, an hourly fast service to Leeds performed strongest, delivering £37m GVA uplift to the District's economy. The current service is slow and infrequent, and is operated by elderly rolling stock, and therefore the transformation is seen in the size of the GVA uplift. We intend to advance the case for a transformation of this route into a high-quality interurban link, calling at Lancaster and Carnforth. The key next step is to develop the business case, working with colleagues in Transport for the North.

The modelling also showed that an improved train service between Lancaster and Morecambe has the potential to achieve the Eden Project's objective of 26% of visitors arriving by rail, and we explore the Council's rail strategy for Morecambe in the next chapter.



Our Priorities - The Eden Project

The Eden Project, based near St. Austell in Cornwall, is a major tourism attraction and conservation charity. They have announced plans, supported by Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster University and the Local Enterprise Partnership, to open an iconic new venue on the seafront at Morecambe. This nationally-significant attraction could open in 2023. This is a major opportunity to support regeneration of the town. Initial estimates suggest a potential for 760,000 visitors per year.

The project partners are considering the transport implications of this volume of visitors. The project needs to be sustainable and make maximum use of public transport means, avoiding congestion and worsening air quality in Morecambe and the surrounding road network. The proximity of the site to Morecambe station presents a significant opportunity.

In train service terms, Morecambe – because of the project, but more importantly because of the need to enhance and support the associated economic development - would need:

- An improved, regular service between Lancaster and Morecambe (half-hourly), with more capacity during the Summer months;
- Some through services at targeted times of day, particularly from Manchester as the largest regional economy within easy “day out” distance from Morecambe; and,
- Good connections and high quality interchange at Lancaster.

We propose that the Morecambe branch is developed as a test bed for a fully sustainable future - a carbon neutral railway - including, for example, battery trains and stations that take less power than they create.

It is estimated that, without improvements to the train service, 16% of visitors to the Eden Project would arrive by train. Service enhancements described above are forecast to increase this towards a current working target of 26%.

Morecambe Station itself, and the route between it, the Eden Project and the Town Centre, should reflect the welcome the town wishes to give to visitors. The current Station building is uninspiring and frequently closed. Morecambe’s Station has the potential to act as an important arrival point within the town. The City Council has ambitious proposals for regenerating the Central Morecambe areas, and a new multi-purpose station would convey pride, intent and direction. For many visitors it may be the first (and last) impression of an area. It is for this very reason that Victorian architects and engineers designed such elaborate stations. They were (and are still) a very visual statement.

A station is also a functioning interchange, its purpose to efficiently enable seamless passage from one mode of transport through the station and onto the train, or vice-versa. Morecambe's original station buildings suited this purpose well, but the modern, existing station is effectively nothing more than a rail halt, divorced from the town's services and facilities despite its relatively close proximity to the promenade and to the town centre.

There is potential for an improved station offer at Morecambe, and for it to be genuinely multi-functional because of the area of land that is available for regeneration around the existing station.

We will lead a project with other local partners and the rail industry to develop options to improve the station facilities. In turn this will complement the high-quality place-making and improvement of the public realm that are essential if Morecambe is to reach its' full economic and social potential.



Our Priorities - Lancaster Station

The improvements to train services set out in this Strategy and the increased connectivity they would bring emphasise the importance of Lancaster Station; not just as an interchange hub between long distance and regional destinations and Morecambe, Carnforth and other local stations, but also as a gateway, supporting the growth and economy of the City.

As the Eden Project develops, Lancaster Station will become a more important interchange. Passengers will arrive from London (on HS2), from Scotland, and from Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds, and will wish to interchange at the City.

The development of the interchange at Lancaster Station requires investment within the building stock and the public realm surrounding the Station. This is essential to facilitate the interchange experience, but is also necessary because of the station's setting within close proximity to the Grade I Listed Lancaster Castle and Lancaster Priory, both of which are tourist destinations.

We will work with West Coast Partnership, as operator of the station, and with Network Rail, as their landlord, to develop a masterplan to support its increasingly important role. This masterplan could include:

- The quality of the approaches and environs of the station
- Increasing civic and commercial use of the station buildings
- Development of the rail interchange experience (including options for connection with Bus Rapid Transit)
- Development of interchange with other sustainable modes
- Investment in the quality and scope of facilities on the station

The masterplan would include a plan for delivery, including how it could be funded.



Summary of our Priorities

Our Rail Strategy sets out an ambitious programme that will require the District to work closely with many other stakeholders to bring our priorities to fruition. The Council's role in achieving each priority will be different. In the case of service improvements, the Council will be a key influencer, pressing the case for change and demonstrating the value they will bring to Lancaster and to the wider region. In the case of stations, the Council will seek to take a more active role as a co-promoter of the work that will need to be delivered.

The table below summarises the priorities.

Rail Strategy Priorities

Long Distance Services

Hourly HS2 services to London, Birmingham and Scotland.

Regional and Local Services

Hourly fast services to Leeds, calling at Carnforth.

Hourly services between Liverpool, Lancaster and Scotland.

Targeted services between Manchester and Morecambe.

Half-hourly service between Lancaster and Morecambe, maximising travel to the Eden project by rail.

New and Better Stations

Develop Lancaster station as interchange hub and gateway to the City.

Develop Morecambe station as a gateway to support the success of the Eden project and the regeneration of the town.

Develop Carnforth station as a key heritage asset supporting the renewal of



Next Steps

Over the coming years the Council, working with Lancashire County Council in their role as transport authority, will:

- Advance the case with HS2, Central Government, Transport for the North and West Coast Partnership that HS2 services to London, Birmingham and Scotland should call at Lancaster. We will demonstrate the economic value of services calling, and the negative economic and reputational risks if these services do not call. We will respond actively and thoughtfully to consultations by the rail industry on the shape of HS2 calling patterns.
- Work with Transport for the North and others to develop the business case for the regional service improvements set out in this document: to Leeds, to Liverpool, to Manchester and to Morecambe.
- Work with the Eden Project, business leaders and others to develop proposals for the transformation of Morecambe station into a high quality gateway for Eden and to support the regeneration of the town.
- Work with West Coast Partnership, Network Rail, the Local Enterprise Partnership and business leaders on a masterplan for the station at Lancaster to support its future role as an increasingly important interchange and gateway to what the City has to offer for businesses, visitors and for residents.





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