

Lancaster City Council | Report Cover Sheet

Meeting	Cabinet		Date	14 September 2021	
Title	High Speed Rail 2 – Lobbying Strategy				
Report of	Director for Economic Growth and Regeneration				
Purpose of Report:					
To endorse the City Council's 2021-2022 strategy in respect of the High Speed Rail 2 Project.					
Key Decision (Y/N)	N	Date of Notice	16 August 2021	Exempt(Y/N)	(N) - Public Report (Y) - Exempt Appendix

Report Summary

This report sets out the current anticipated impacts of the High Speed Rail 2 Project upon the Lancaster District, and seeks to agree a strategy to press Lancaster's case for being a stopping station for High Speed Rail 2 trains.

Recommendations of Councillor Gina Dowding

- (i) It is recommended that Cabinet agrees the Strategy appended to this report.
- (ii) That Cabinet agrees that Officers may pursue any legitimate, additional opportunities for lobbying or other similar activities that will enable the Council to advance Lancaster's case, in accordance with the existing project budget.
- (iii) That in the event that any future additional work (beyond the current budget) is considered necessary, such as further engagement of consultants to assist with advancing Lancaster's case, a further report shall be brought to Cabinet to determine whether to agree to resource the additional work.

Relationship to Policy Framework

In agreeing to the Lobbying Strategy, the Council will be achieving several of its' Corporate Priorities identified in the 2020 Update. In particular, it will be taking action to meet the challenges of the climate emergency by helping to continue the transition to an accessible, inclusive and low-carbon transport systems. It will also be supporting Lancaster's status as a major city on the West Coast Mainline network, which help to secure investment and regeneration across the Lancaster District. The retention of direct London-bound services will help serve the needs of our local residents, organisations and businesses;

The Lancaster District Local Plan includes policies which seek to maximise the opportunities provided by Lancaster's location on the main strategic rail network and improve transport connectivity.

Conclusion of Impact Assessment(s) where applicable	
<p>Climate The increased use of rail within the district has the potential to positively influence transport modal choices and thus mitigate against the impacts of climate change. Rail journeys provide a low carbon alternative to car transportation.</p>	<p>Wellbeing & Social Value By seeking to protect Lancaster's status as a stopping station for direct London-bound services, the local authority aims to ensure that they are genuine, viable alternatives to private vehicular travel.</p>
<p>Digital N/A</p>	<p>Health & Safety N/A</p>
<p>Equality Viable public transport alternatives to private transport by car for long distance journeys (e.g. to London)</p>	<p>Community Safety N/A</p>
Details of Consultation	
<p>None.</p> <p>Further future consultation regarding the High Speed Rail 2 Project will be undertaken at a national level, and it is anticipated that the City Council will formally respond.</p>	
Legal Implications	
<p>None.</p>	
Financial Implications	
<p>In terms of agreeing the strategy, there are no additional financial implications. All work undertaken to date and the steps identified in the Appendix are anticipated to be met from the existing budget commitment.</p> <p>If further programme work is considered necessary because of changes to the High Speed Rail 2 programme, then Officers will provide Cabinet with a suite of options prior to any additional financial commitment.</p>	
Other Resource or Risk Implications	
<p>None in terms of enacting the recommendations.</p>	
Section 151 Officer's Comments	
<p>The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no additional comments to add to this report.</p>	
Monitoring Officer's Comments	
<p>The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no additional comments to add to this report.</p>	

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Links to Background Papers	
Appendix 1: Draft HS2 Lobbying Strategy (Appendix Exempt)	

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The High Speed (HS) 2 project aims to deliver new railway infrastructure to improve rail capacity and reduce rail journey times across the country. The project is phased, and the current phases are:

Phase 1:

A new 140 mile railway line will be constructed from London Euston to north of Birmingham. Phase One is currently due to open between 2029 and 2033.

Phase 2a:

This phase will connect the West Midlands to Crewe, and it is anticipated that high speed services could be operating on this part of the line between 2029 and 2033.

Phase 2b:

This phase is more complex because it involves separate eastern and western legs. The eastern leg connects the West Midlands through to Leeds. The western leg will connect Manchester to the high speed lines at Crewe. Last year the Department for Transport confirmed that it would prioritise development of the western leg, whilst a decision regarding the “best approach” to the eastern leg would be considered in due course.

1.2 No new railway lines are delivered through the Lancaster District, because HS2 services will use the existing West Coast Mainline route. HS2 services would initially join the existing rail network (the West Coast Mainline) south of Crewe. HS2 trains will travel as far north as Glasgow and Edinburgh. HS2 services will either stop at, or pass through, Lancaster Station.

1.3 Momentum is building around the HS2 project. HS2 Ltd have confirmed that the majority of their early works programme, comprising demolitions and site clearance, is nearing completion. There is considerable tunnelling, piling and other associated works at a number of sites along the new route.

2.0 Background – Predicted Loss of Direct London Services

2.1 Last year, HS2 Ltd produced a report titled PFMv9 (PLANET Framework Model) Assumptions Report. The Report aimed to provide a summary of modelling and forecasting assumptions to generate part of the economic business case for the HS2

project. It establishes a set of train services which HS2 expected to operate, and changes to the existing ('classic') rail network services once HS2 opens.

- 2.2 Analysis of this report enables the City Council to consider the impacts of the various changes to rail services relating to Lancaster Station. The impacts include the loss of Lancaster's direct service to London when the first phase of HS2 opens, and the loss of the slower service direct to London which runs via Birmingham New Street when all phases of HS2 are open.
- 2.3 PFMv9 does envisage an hourly Birmingham to Scotland HS2 train service which will call at Lancaster, but this does not provide a direct train to London.
- 2.4 The loss of a London direct train service will result in a marked deterioration in this district's rail connectivity. If implemented, Lancaster to London travellers would change to a HS2 train at Preston. Whilst the overall end-to-end journey time would be quicker than the current journey time, the psychological barrier of a change of train is likely to be off-putting to some travellers. Additionally, the removal of Lancaster from the list of calling rail stations will cause significant damage to perceptions of the prestige of the city, implying a demotion of importance on the strategic transport network.

3.0 Future Service Provision and Timetabling

- 3.1 The fact that PFMv9 indicates a loss of direct London services for Lancaster does not automatically mean that this will be the final outcome. The purpose of PFMv9 is to illustrate a set of train service assumptions, of which benefits and operating costs can then be compiled. It is not a Train Service Specification. This is clarified in paragraph 5.1.5 of PFMv9 which states:

"These assumptions are designed only for the purpose of providing a suitable reference case for the appraisal of HS2. Decisions have not yet been taken about train service requirements, or which stock will operate them...and therefore these service patterns should be considered indicative".

- 3.2 Earlier, in December 2019 the Department for Transport entered into a contract with West Coast Partnership (WCP) to operate InterCity train services on the West Coast Mainline, and also to carry out the role of Shadow Operator. The role of the Shadow Operator is to prepare for and implement the changes to train services. In other words, they will be responsible for devising the future Train Service Specification. Progress regarding this is anticipated during 2022 and will be subject to stakeholder and public consultation. WCP have confirmed that due to the impact of Covid, the precise timing of this is still to be confirmed.
- 3.3 Timetabling is not fixed irrevocably, and it is likely that timetables will continue to be reviewed based upon changes in demand, wider rail funding issues, commercial aspirations, rail user priorities and government policy.

4.0 Progress Since PFMv9

- 4.1 Both Lancashire County Council, in its' role as strategic transport authority, and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership are supportive of the need for HS2 services to serve its' two largest mainline West Coast stations, Preston and Lancaster. Notwithstanding

this welcome support, the City Council resolved to develop and formally adopt its' Rail Strategy for Lancaster District' (Cabinet, 9 June 2020).

- 4.2 Since the adoption of the Rail Strategy, the City Council has been working with its' rail consultants, SLC Rail, and has met with various key parties including the Shadow Operator. There is still clearly an opportunity for the Lancaster District to press its' case for a continued direct London service.
- 4.3 The City Council also participated in the WCP Stakeholder Conference in Spring 2021 and advocated the case for Lancaster's inclusion as a stopping station for London-bound HS2 services. The Conference subsequently noted that there would be a "clean sheet" approach to planning future HS2 services, which provides further encouragement for the Council's continued lobbying efforts.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Following the work undertaken this year, the City Council now needs to move to the next stage of advancing the case for Lancaster, in order for the city (and the wider district) to retain its' status as a location that is served by direct London services.
- 5.2 Appended to this report is a draft strategy which identifies the activities that the City Council should aim to undertake as part of arguing the case for Lancaster's retention as a stopping station.
- 5.3 If approved, it is recommended that the strategy is implemented immediately.

6.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

Option 1: Agree the strategy appended to the report
<p>Advantages:</p> <p>The strategy is considered the most effective way in which to state the case for a Lancaster call for London-bound HS2 services.</p>
<p>Disadvantages:</p> <p>None – highlighting Lancaster's case is considered an appropriate and responsible course of action.</p>
<p>Risks:</p> <p>There are no identifiable risks in terms of arguing Lancaster's position.</p>
Option 2: Not agree the strategy appended to the report
<p>Advantages:</p>

None that are apparent – it is possible that the future Train Service Specification may deliver Lancaster stopping services without direct input from the City Council, but this is a risk.

Disadvantages:

Without a cohesive strategy, there is a risk that Lancaster's case for direct London services is ineffective or is not heard at all.

Risks:

Not agreeing the strategy would potentially allow a draft Train Service Specification to be published without City Council input.

7.0. Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

7.1 The officer preferred option is Option 1.

7.2 There are compelling economic, environmental and social reasons why Lancaster should continue to be served by direct London trains. By agreeing and implementing the strategy, the City Council is continuing to be proactive in terms of influencing the debate regarding future HS2 service provision.