

Welsh rail underfunded by £2.4bn



NEW PATH: *Railways are expected to play their part in cutting overall transport emissions and being part of a future sustainable, greener system*

The Welsh Government is hoping that the Union Connectivity Review (see page 3) will clear the way to address a £2.4 billion underfunding of the Welsh railway network.

Ken Skates, the Welsh minister for economy and transport said the UCR, currently underway, presented an opportunity for the UK Government to put things right.

The Welsh Government, which believes the underfunding is at least £2.4 billion but could be as much as £5.1 billion, unveiled its draft 20-year Llwybr Newydd (New Path) transport strategy in November, with the main aim of cutting emissions by 2040 with a sustainable, greener system.

The Welsh Government is hampered because most rail decisions are not devolved and are often made in London. However, it pledges to work closely with the UK Government while pressing for full devolution of rail.

Expanding rail services, improving accessibility on stations and trains, moving freight from road to rail and improving information services for Welsh speakers are priorities. Llwybr Newydd includes nine mini-plans – one for each of the transport modes and sectors – active travel (walking and cycling); rail; bus; roads, streets and

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parking; the third sector; taxis and private hire vehicles; freight and logistics; ports and maritime transport and aviation.

The report accepts that there are particular challenges for rail in Wales because of geography, the rural nature of the country and historic and continued underinvestment.

Rail is not devolved to Wales, although recently the Welsh Government has taken on direct responsibility for the Core Valley Lines, with services delivered by Transport for Wales.

Lee Waters, deputy minister for economy and transport, said alternatives to the car must be made more attractive. The public is invited to comment on the Llwybr Newydd until 25 January.

<https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd>

Railfuture condemns above-inflation rail fares increase



Picture: RAILWATCH

Railfuture condemned the Government's decision in December to increase rail fares next year by more than the rate of inflation.

The normal train fare rises in January have been delayed until March – with a sting in the tail. Instead of rising 1.6% to match the retail price index, the Government has decided regulated fares will increase by 2.6%.

“This is not going to help bring passengers back to trains,” said Railfuture chairman Chris Page.

“This increase will come at a time when people are deciding whether to go back to work 5 days a week. Indeed there is a risk that it will result in even lower revenue for the Government, by pricing people off the railways.

“The delay in implementing flexi-seasons will also reduce rail revenue. They are needed in March when

people will be deciding how many days per week to go to work away from home. Passengers will vote with their feet and revenue will be less as they travel, say, three days per week with ordinary tickets instead of four with a flexi-season. The Government continues to impose fare rises using the retail price index instead of the consumer price index, meaning that rail fares have become less and less affordable over the years.

“To use RPI+1% is outrageous and completely unjustified. Things are not going to get back to near normal until about June at the earliest, so a 2.6% increase will not generate much cash when there are so few passengers travelling. It will just annoy the very people the industry needs to be cultivating.

“Meanwhile fuel duty for motorists remains frozen, as it has been for ten years now.”

Union leaders condemned the rise, with Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association calling it a "kick in the teeth for passengers".

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/rail-fare-ticket-increase-inflation-delay-b1774631.html>

Railfuture press releases

Railfuture press releases can be read in full at [Railfuture press releases](#)

A review of other Railfuture appearances in print and broadcast media can be seen at [Railfuture in the news](#)

Board boost

Mike Rose from Yorkshire and Neil Middleton from London and South East were co-opted on to the Railfuture board in November.

Both are expecting to stand for election to the board next year

Rail fails to offer Boxing Day service

Most train companies will not run services on Boxing Day this year and there will be no long-distance trains. Only six companies will run a partial service. ScotRail, Heathrow and Stansted Express will run trains. Southern will run trains between London, Surrey and Sussex while some trains will run on the London Overground and TfL Rail

Royal train tour

The royal train was used for a three-day 1,250 mile tour of Great Britain in early December with Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge visiting Scotland, Wales and England to thank Covid-19 volunteers

Green talk in Westminster but Chancellor cuts rail budget

Chancellor Rishi Sunak contradicted the Government's climate-change policy in his December spending review by cutting £1 billion from Network Rail's budget for electrification and other projects. But the 10% cut to the rail enhancements budget for 2019-24 was revealed by rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris only in response to a parliamentary written question. It also highlights the small figure – £500 million – earmarked for the much-trumpeted Restoring Your Railway policy which claims it will fund the reopening of some of the lines closed under the 1960s Beeching plan.

Railfuture said the review was "lacking in ideas as much as lacking in content". Chairman Chris Page said: "There was no mention in the review of electrification, which with modal shift is the best way to decarbonise transport. Railway electrification teams are being disbanded once their projects are completed. We need to accelerate existing rail proposals such as the TransPennine route upgrade, reliability improvements around Manchester, and Midland main line electrification."

In November, the Government also announced it was stopping development work on London's Crossrail 2. The Mayor of London's office said it plans to safeguard the Crossrail 2 route for the future.

There was speculation in November that Chancellor Rishi Sunak was considering introducing road pricing as a way to combat a £40 billion tax shortfall. At the moment, the Government is failing to make drivers pay for the real cost of the road transport network.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents/spending-review-2020>

Old trains given a new lease of Flex life in Wales

Transport for Wales became the first operator to introduce a class 769 into passenger service in

November. The trains are special because they can operate as either electric or diesel. TfW has nine four-car Flex sets on order from Porterbrook, while Northern plans to use its ordered eight 769s for its Manchester-Southport service. Great Western wants to use 769s for an Oxford-Reading-Gatwick Airport service, while the Rail Operations Group plans to use class 769s for freight. The four-car trains were built at York as dual voltage electric



Flex train at Heath High Level station in Cardiff

class 319s, allowing British Rail to launch its Thameslink service in 1987. The 319s were able to operate under 25kV AC overhead lines between Bedford and London and on third rail 750V DC lines between London and Brighton.

Once new Siemens trains were introduced on Thameslink, the Porterbrook rolling stock company decided that the 319s (already fitted with accessible toilets and passenger information systems) could be reinvented. So Brush Traction at Loughborough added a pair of MAN diesel engines, one under each driving trailer vehicle, to each four-car train. Transport for Wales has been told that the class 769s can equal or exceed the performance of the class 150 diesel Sprinters (also built at York) which they replaced.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Rail_Class_769

Connectivity review should target high speed Scottish rail

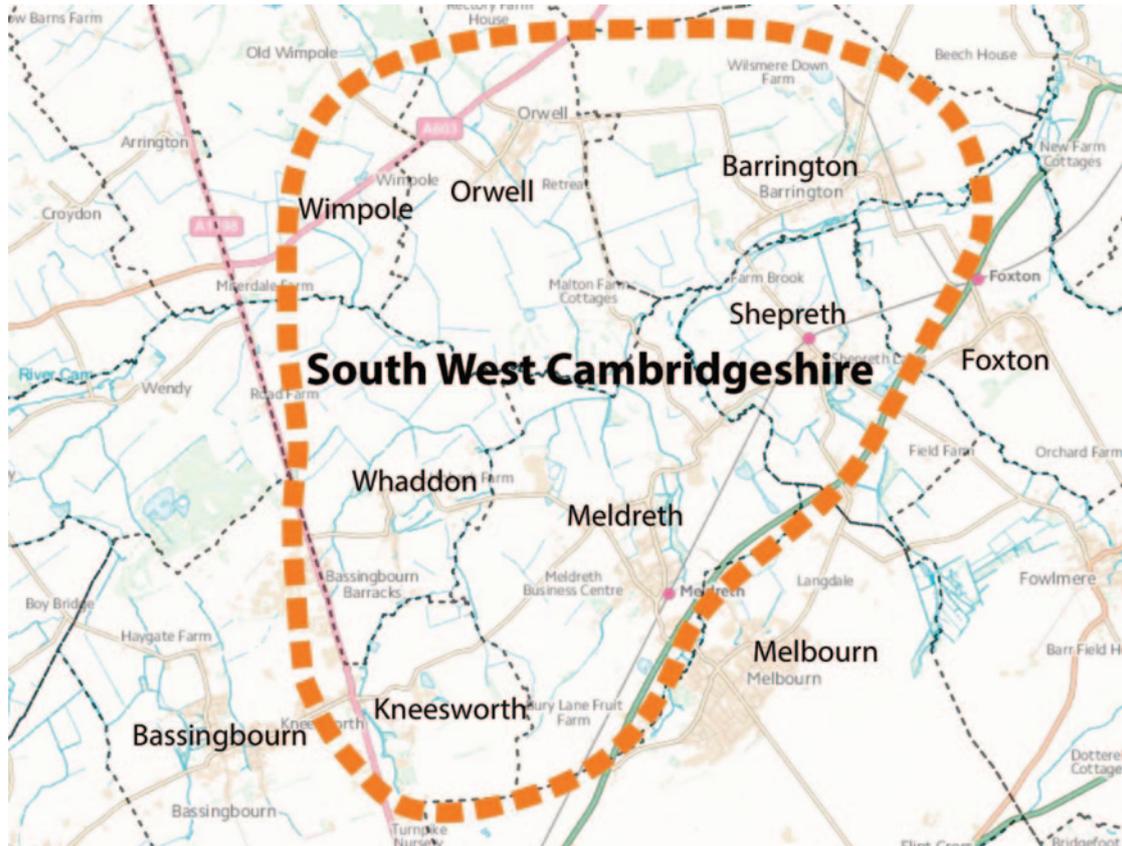
The Department for Transport is currently conducting a review into connectivity between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister is believed to favour a tunnel from Scotland to Northern Ireland, but rail experts are likely to prioritise a proper HS2 extension to Scotland. Anglo-Scottish high speed rail may become a political priority, which will need major work in the areas around both Shap and Beattock. The Union Connectivity Review was set up in October and is being undertaken by Sir Peter Hendy, who will present an interim report in January. Sir Peter is supported by a panel – Michele Dix, Elaine Seagriff, Neale Coleman and Professor David Begg. Consultation closes on 30 December

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/union-connectivity-review-call-for-evidence>

Goodbye GRIP Hello PACE

Network Rail is to abandon the eight-stage Governance for Rail Investment Projects (GRIP), and replace it with a "faster" process called PACE (Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment). GRIP has been blamed for delaying crucial projects

How trains could serve new towns aiming for zero-carbon



Map: JOHN SUTTON, GEOGRAPH

A proposal to build 25,000 new homes near Cambridge “stunned” people living in the area and prompted protests that the homes are “unwanted and unsustainable”. But Railfuture’s Peter Wakefield pointed out that there is enormous demand for more housing in the Cambridge area. He said: “Already every inch of the existing city is being built on.”

The plan for a “zero-carbon community” Cambridge South West New Town, if it eventually gets the go-ahead, must be centred on the three existing Thameslink stations at Foxton, Shepreth and Meldreth with extensive active travel provision to them and necessary accessibility upgrades. The new town is being proposed by developer Thakeham and would include land around Barrington, Bassingbourn and Wimpole.

The population within the new town could grow to nearly 90,000 because there are already development plans centred on Foxton and Meldreth. South Cambridgeshire District Council has said that it is far too early to say whether the location is suitable for any development. The proposals would be assessed along with 650 other sites put forward for the area’s local plan. The larger Cambridge metropolitan area could eventually expand to accommodate a population of half a million over the next 20 to 30 years. As many as 10,000 new homes are likely to be built near Cambridge North station. Two big developments, the Iron Works and the Timber Works, are currently being built near Cambridge station.

Level boarding complaints over Heathrow new trains

Access campaigners were shocked to learn in December that Heathrow Express trains can make level boarding difficult at both Paddington and Heathrow stations. One campaigner said: “This is shocking – a huge step backwards. Do you not understand that using ramps makes travel sooo much worse for wheelchair users?” while another said: “I will dearly miss the old trains and a loss of level boarding on Heathrow Express.” Rail Action emailed Heathrow Express with the following message: “We have had complaints that your new trains do not allow level access at

What’s on

Many rail-related events are listed on Railfuture’s website:

www.railfuture.org.uk/events

Many will not now take place because of the Covid-19 lockdown

Railfuture conferences

The next Railfuture conference will be online only

www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

Reopenings and electrification for Portugal

Portugal plans to build a high speed rail line from Lisbon to Porto as part of a £9 billion plan to upgrade and electrify the railway, with help from European Union funds. The plan includes reopening several lines, including one across the Spanish border at Barca d’Alva

COP rail to Glasgow

Delegates to the global climate change conference in November next year should travel to Glasgow by train, says the European Rail Campaign (UK). It is possible from most places in Europe. COP 26 is the 26th Conference of the Parties and follows the key agreement at the Paris COP 21 conference

Paddington or Heathrow yet your website says: "Easy access for everyone. There's no step on a Heathrow Express train. Level platform access means no struggling with luggage and easy boarding for wheelchairs (there are dedicated wheelchair areas throughout the train too)".

Heathrow Express explained that the Bombardier-built class 387 trains do still allow level boarding but the gap between train and platform is slightly wider than the class 332 trains which they replace. So Heathrow Express is modifying the class 387 trains by extending the step boards to reduce the gap.

<https://www.heathrowexpress.com>

Twitter: @LevelBoarding

Twitter: @SpeedySticks007

The Leonard Cheshire charity held an online Get on Board meeting via Zoom in early December to devise ways of making it easier for people to travel by train. The presentations included speech to text captions and British Sign Language interpretations. Leonard Cheshire is calling for a new law that guarantees all rail journeys in Britain will be fully accessible by 2030. It calls for sufficient funding to guarantee genuine progress.

Leonard Cheshire blogger Sarah said: "I would travel more if all stations were accessible. I've read that, since coronavirus, rail stations have blocked off areas because of one-way systems. That is tricky for people with visual impairments. This is another addition to an already long list of problems with rail travel."

<https://www.leonardcheshire.org/>

Rail travellers with disabilities have been invited to join an accessibility panel, set up jointly between train operators Greater Anglia and c2c, with the aim of making it easier to travel by rail. If you have lived experience of disability and want to work with train operators to make rail travel more accessible please email:

accessibilitypanel@greateranglia.co.uk

Railfuture accessibility leader Graham Collett and disability champion Stephen Brookes were meeting Northern Rail's head of property in December to discuss access problems. Railfuture member Owen O'Neill argues that Access for All concentrates too much on getting passengers on to platforms, rather than considering the entire journey. Train makers need motivation to ensure that the heights of their vehicle doors suit the purpose to which they will be put.

He said: "As an example, Spalding, despite the £2 million spent on it, at the moment has lifts switched on only when the station is staffed – which does not cover all times when services run.

"The train operator has assured Railfuture that this is in the process of being resolved by putting in place remote monitoring, but it is an example where a tiny bit of extra thought or money is needed to get the most accessibility return for the investment that has already been spent."

David Harby of Railfuture Lincolnshire added: "Rail is taking a very long time to catch up on disabled access. All the buses I have used for at least the past three years have been disabled-friendly.

"Take Nottingham railway station as an example. The lifts are at the extreme west end of the platforms but regional services often stop at the 'C' (east) end of the platforms so to change trains anyone with limited ability to use stairs has to walk the full length of two platforms.

"We should not just be looking at the number of disabled passengers wanting to use rail. A large percentage of over-60s might not consider themselves disabled but they still cannot use stairs while carrying suitcases. Anyone with young children, not just in a pushchair, along with shopping bags and all the extras they need for the children find it difficult to manage stairs and train doors.

Esk Valley anger over delays to signalling upgrade

Campaigners in North Yorkshire are calling for signalling improvements to the Grosmont-Whitby line to be given the go-ahead immediately. Esk Valley Railway Development Company believes £4.5 million on offer from Sirius Minerals could pay for flexible cab-based radio electronic token block which would clear the way to double the service – with shorter journey times.

The CRP is urging North Yorkshire County Council to support RETB for the Esk Valley line, which has a regular Northern service, plus heritage trains from the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

Alan Williams, chairman of Esk Valley Community Rail Partnership, said: "This is a prime example of a possible fast track scheme which is already potentially fully funded by the private sector being constantly thwarted by the local authority."

<http://www.eskvalleyrailway.co.uk/evrdc.html>

Commons inquiry

An investigation into how major transport infrastructure projects are appraised and delivered is being carried out by the House of Commons transport committee. Closing date for submissions is 15 January 2021.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/153/transport-committee>

“Many platform shelters are too narrow to enable a wheelchair user to get out of the rain and are badly sited on the platform so the train stop board is at one end and the shelter at the other. This inconveniences passengers and increases station dwell times. Access to the platform is only a small part of the journey. We should look at the whole journey.”

Alstom to take over Derby-based train maker Bombardier



Train makers Alstom and Bombardier are expected to join forces in January 2021 after Alstom was given permission to buy Bombardier, which makes some trains at Derby. The consortium announced in December that it would be supplying 204 new double-deck train coaches (pictured left) to Belgian Railways. The trains will have sliding access ramps.

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/business/alstom-bombardier-deal-to-complete-in-january/57930.article>

Commuters call for comfortable trains for electric service

Midland main line electrification work has been completed to clear the way for an electric train service from London and Bedford to Kettering.

Testing of the overhead line equipment was taking place in December and six class 360s from Greater Anglia have been transferred to the Midland for crew training between Kettering and Kentish Town.

Bedford Commuters Association is now calling for the trains to be upgraded internally to provide wifi, two-by-two seating with tables in bays, seat-back tables for airline-style seats, enough room for knees, legs and elbows, good quality seating and adequate luggage space for people travelling to Luton Airport, cycle storage near doors, plenty of waste bins, carpet or vinyl flooring, air conditioning, good information screens and power points for recharging computers and phones.

<http://www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk/>

Sleeper trains on the way back to counter airline pollution

The European Parliament is planning a study on cross-border long-distance passenger trains, including how to increase the number of night trains. A Back on Track coalition of campaigners in Europe is calling for Brussels to be made the hub of a night train network. A new night train service starts in March serving Stockholm, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Berlin. It will have sleeping accommodation, seats and a restaurant car for part of its journey. Well-informed Scandinavians are increasingly demanding long-distance sleeping car trains to avoid the need to travel by air to destinations in southern Europe. A “trains instead of planes” conference was held in November by the Swiss campaign group UmverkehR. The airline Germanwings has advised staff threatened with redundancy to apply for jobs with the German railway Deutsche Bahn.

A poll shows that nearly two thirds of people support a ban on short-haul flights to help combat climate change. Also, 58% said governments should give public funds to national airlines only if these reduce their environmental impact.

Open access operator RegioJet, which introduced a sleeper service from Prague to Croatia, plans to expand with services to Poland and the Ukraine.

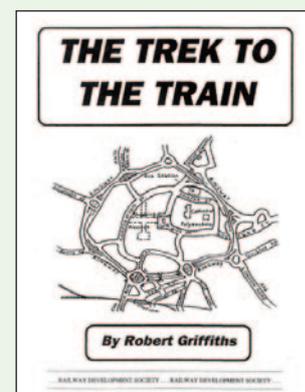
<http://back-on-track.eu>

<https://www.umverkehr.ch>

Stoke good news?

A revamp of the area around Stoke-on-Trent station is part of a £29 million Transforming Cities plan. A new transport hub will be created to improve walking and cycling routes. Longton station will also be improved. One of the main aims is to cut pollution and improve air quality, which is in stark contrast to the £43 million one-kilometre Etruria Valley link road project which will attract more road traffic. Work on the new road started in October.

In the 1990s, Railfuture member Robert Griffiths was shocked by changes



in his home city of Stoke-on-Trent which made it more difficult for people to get to the railway station. When he started looking at other cities and towns, he discovered that Stoke was not unique. New roads have made life difficult for pedestrians, cyclists – and rail passengers. *His Trek to the Train* was published by the Railway Development Society (Railfuture’s predecessor) in 1993 with Coventry featuring on the cover

2021 European year of rail to tackle climate change

The European Commission and the European Parliament have designated 2021 as European Year of Rail. The European Commission has given rail the pivotal role in its sustainable mobility strategy, which is aiming at zero-emission mobility and climate neutrality by 2050. German Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer said: "Rail is the answer to many critical issues in the area of mobility, such as climate neutrality, energy efficiency, crisis resilience and safety".

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_364

Eurostar needs financial aid rather than polluting airlines

The British Government has failed to provide financial support for Eurostar, which has been badly hit by Covid-19 travel restrictions. Eurostar says it is being treated unfairly after the aviation sector was given £8 million airport rate relief. Eurostar said: "Eurostar has been left fighting for its survival against a 95 per cent drop in demand, while aviation has received over £1.8 billion in support through loans, tax deferrals and financing. This scheme should be extended to include international rail services."

Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT union, said: "It is wholly wrong that Eurostar, an eco-friendly service that is a beacon for the future of our railways, is being denied the kind of financial support being offered to the airports."

<https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-demands-government-support-to-protect-jobs-at-eurostar/>

Liverpool plans for post-HS2 'world of trains' station

A new rail station is to be created in Liverpool to cope with HS2 coming to the city and a big expansion of services resulting from the implementation of the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals.

A station commission has been set up to ensure that the new rail services will operate from a world class rail station which can serve the region effectively. The Commission was created by Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and met in December. The commission, chaired by Professor Denise Barrett-Baxendale, the chief executive of Everton Football Club, will consider options for the station's location and its potential for regeneration and redevelopment.

Mr Rotheram said: "I want our region to maximise the huge opportunities that HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail offer. The current capacity at Lime Street is not enough to cope with significantly larger high speed trains. I want it to be an architecturally stunning gateway which offers a mix of leisure, retail and office accommodation."

Professor Barrett-Baxendale said: "This project is exactly what is needed to boost the region and bring much needed jobs and prosperity to the area."

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/station-commission-begins-journey-towards-a-world-class-rail-station-for-the-liverpool-city-region/>



Liverpool Lime Street station in February 2020

Picture: RAILWATCH

Harrogate line improvements

Two trains an hour will be able to operate on the York-Harrogate line after signalling and other improvements in a £9.8 million upgrade to the Knaresborough-Poppleton section and a new track layout at Cattall, where there was a ceremony, below, to mark completion of the work. North Yorkshire County Councillor Don Mackenzie said: "We are pleased to be part of the delivery of this improvement to the Harrogate line which will enable an increased, quicker and more reliable service in the future. The line now benefits from more modern technology."

Clem Dye of the Harrogate line supporters said: "Now all we need is the remaining single track section of the line to be double-tracked, and electrification, and we are all set."

<http://www.harrogateline.org/>



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

Rethink HS2 route to Leeds, NIC tells the Government

The £32 billion Birmingham to Leeds leg of the HS2 high-speed network should be deferred in favour of developing regional rail links across the north, according to a report by the National Infrastructure Commission in December.

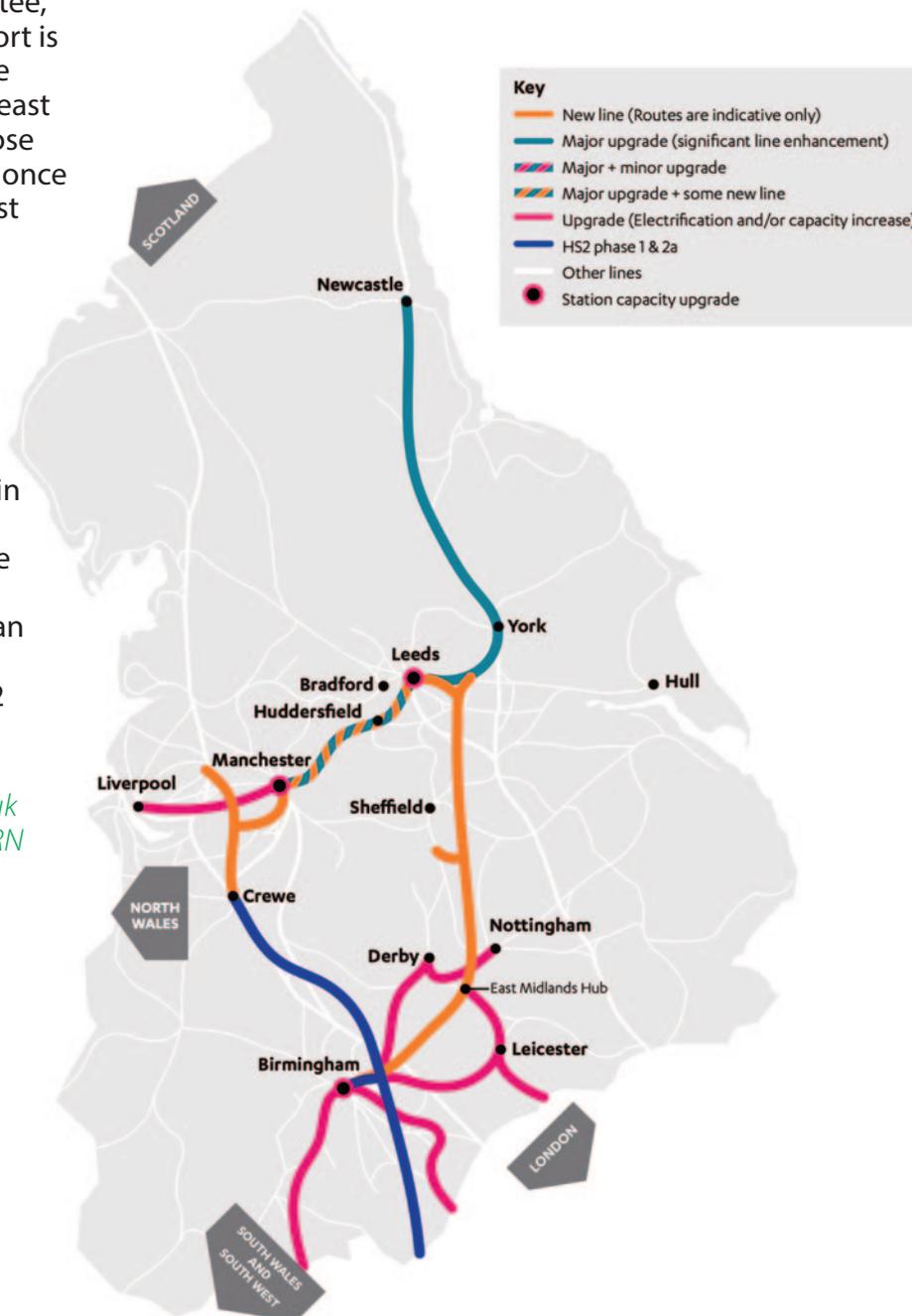
The NIC, headed by Sir John Armitt, said routes between Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester, and the Nottingham-Birmingham line should be improved before the high-speed link to London.

Maria Machancoses, director of Midlands Connect, said: "Sacrificing parts of the high-speed network now would short-change millions of people across the Midlands. HS2 must be delivered in its entirety. To stall, scale down or delay now will cause irreparable economic damage to communities across the region."

Lilian Greenwood, MP for Nottingham South and former chair of the transport select committee, said: "This report is an insult to the people of the east Midlands, whose interests have once again been cast aside by Westminster."

Details of the five indicative packages, including maps and lists of the main schemes included in the commission's assessment, can be found on pages 72 to 92 of the main report:

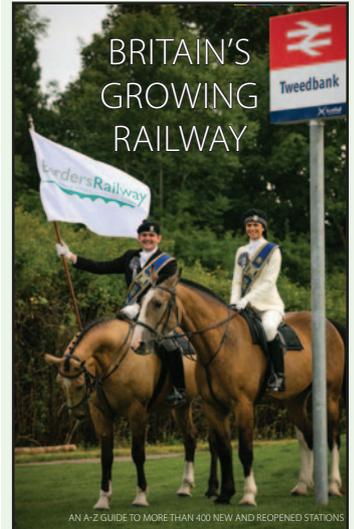
<https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/RN-A-Final-Report-15122020.pdf>



One of five options, giving priority to long-distance links in December's National Infrastructure Commission report

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