

BES Executive Members

Briefing Note

22 April 2016

Burnley-Colne-Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement

Background and Advice

The North Yorkshire Strategic Transport Prospectus and Local Transport Plan 4 developed and approved over the last year, acknowledges that there is growing interest in the east-west transport corridor linking Central Lancashire with North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region. This corridor comprises the M65/A56/A6068 and A59 roads and parallel rail routes including the Calder Valley line linking Preston, Blackburn and Burnley with Bradford and Leeds via Hebden Bridge and Halifax. Several long-standing aspirations for improved connectivity by both road and rail currently exist and a number of schemes have been considered in the past. The corridor is not covered specifically by any of the Department for Transport led studies announced in the Road Investment Strategy in December 2014 as none of the Trans-Pennine routes within it are part of the Strategic Road Network.

Lancashire County Council have done a lot of work to identify the issues and see East Lancashire's rail network as relatively constrained in terms of connectivity, capacity, performance, journey quality, journey times and passenger facilities at many of the smaller stations and the growing perception of East Lancashire being poorly connected. They commissioned a Rail Connectivity Study examining this issue in depth, adopting a Conditional Outputs approach in accordance with standard rail industry practice and recognising that to deliver transformational change to East Lancashire's rail network will require the support of Network Rail, Rail North and the relevant Train Operating Companies. It concluded that in order to achieve the Conditional Outputs that would enhance connectivity between East Lancashire and Leeds, in particular, increased service frequency and improved journey times, the potential impact on the capacity of the Calder Valley line between Todmorden and Leeds would need to be assessed. Of greatest relevance to North Yorkshire it also concluded that, should future economic circumstances dictate that connectivity between East Lancashire and Leeds be enhanced to the point where capacity on the Calder Valley line becomes a constraining factor, consideration of alternative options between Burnley and Leeds such as reinstatement of the line between Colne and Skipton and associated upgrade of the existing Colne branch may become necessary.

The study was approved by the Lancashire Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 1st June 2015 as the Lancashire County Council's adopted position in future discussions and negotiations with the Department for Transport, Rail North, the wider rail industry and adjacent transport authorities, in particular, with regard to the next rail industry investment period covering 2019 to 2024 ('Control Period 6').

The branch from Gannow Junction east of Rose Grove to Burnley Central, Nelson and Colne is single track and previously continued to Skipton as a through route, but passenger services ceased in January 1970 and the track was removed. The track

bed remains more or less intact, and if reinstated could enable services to continue through to Skipton and possibly to Leeds along the electrified Airedale Line, thereby significantly reducing journey times between Nelson and Colne and Leeds. A group of local stakeholders, the Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP) has been campaigning for the route between Colne and Skipton to be reopened for a number of years.

Following a 'stakeholder summit' meeting arranged by the Department for Transport held in Skipton on 6th January 2015, the County Council along with colleagues from Lancashire County Council, Craven District Council, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities, Network Rail, Train Operating Company and a representative from SELRAP a working group was established to consider what purposes a rail link between Burnley, Colne and Skipton could potentially serve in order to place such a scheme in the correct context in transport planning terms. The working group adopted a Conditional Outputs approach to maintain consistency with standard rail industry practice. The report of the working group is now complete.

The Burnley – Colne – Skipton Railway Conditional Outputs Statement attached at Appendix 'A', sets out a series of conditional outputs that could be relevant to the potential reopening of the Colne to Skipton railway line. These conditional outputs are a set of outcomes, in terms of linkages for both passenger and freight transport, to which the reopened line could be relevant, and against which a potential scheme should be assessed together with alternative options to achieve the same outcomes. They have been developed without considering affordability, deliverability or specific infrastructure, nor do they imply a business case for any measures to fulfil them. It will be for subsequent stages of work to consider the design, operational feasibility and cost implications of fulfilling the conditional outputs, as well as undertaking demand and revenue forecasting work. There will also be a need to investigate the potential scale of wider economic, social and environmental benefits that fulfilling some or all of the conditional outputs might unlock.

The timing of this work is partly driven by the forthcoming Network Rail North of England Route Study, on which work is expected to commence later this year. It is intended that the findings of this Conditional Outputs Statement will inform the Route Study process, which could then take forward any recommendations implied by this work, as appropriate. The Statement will also be available to inform Transport for the North's developing strategies for future connectivity across the North.

Whilst the Conditional Outputs Statement is only intended to be the starting point for the development of a strategic case for improved rail connectivity in the Preston - Burnley - Colne - Skipton - Leeds corridor, the conditional outputs identified underline the wide variety of transport links to which reopening the Colne to Skipton line could potentially be relevant. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a strong case, either strategically or economically, for providing a specific rail link between Colne and Skipton, rather that when considering the case for doing so, options relevant to all of the conditional outputs should be considered.

The Statement concludes that further consideration of a reopened rail link between Colne and Skipton should take place in the context of strategic as opposed to local transport planning in order to ensure that all of the conditional outputs identified are taken into account. This in turn means that it will be necessary to investigate all

potential options that might fulfil these conditional outputs as opposed to considering the case for a reopened railway between Colne and Skipton in isolation.

The authorities who have created the Statement are aware of Lancashire County Council's intention to use it in future engagement, as will North Yorkshire County Council, with the Department for Transport, Transport for the North, Network Rail, the wider rail industry and other interested parties, and that the Statement will enter the public domain.

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