

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE



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Direct Rail Link to Manchester and National Rail Improvements Programme

PURPOSE

- To seek Members approval of the Council's response to Network Rail's consultation on the Lancashire and Cumbria Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

To seek Members view on the use of National Rail Improvements Programme Funding.

RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that Members:
 - Approve the draft response to the RUS included in Appendix 2 of this report.
 - Seek support from Network Rail and Northern Rail to make significant investment in Manchester Road station with an upgrade to a fully staffed station with a smaller investment at Central station and its subsequent down grading to an un-staffed stop.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- Securing a direct rail link to Manchester with a journey time of less than 45 minutes is identified as a key 10 year transformational project in Burnley's Future. The RUS sets out Network Rail's plans for the railway in Lancashire and Cumbria over the next 10 years and will influence the investment decisions of Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT). It is important that the RUS reflects BBC's aspirations for a direct rail service to Manchester alongside other improvements.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Lancashire and Cumbria RUS

4. The Lancashire and Cumbria Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) has been prepared by Network Rail to provide a strategic vision for the future of rail routes in the area. It considers issues over an 11 year time period.
5. The RUS analyses the current capability and capacity of the railway in order to measure its capability to meet future demands. A set of options has been generated that could potentially meet known and predicted demands. These options have then been analysed to identify those that offer the most promising and value for money solutions. The Draft RUS is open for consultation until July 08. Responses will be considered and appropriate refinements made.
6. The RUS identifies 7 generic gaps in provision:
 - Inter/Intra regional links are typically poor with infrequent services, short days and lack of direct journey opportunities
 - The rail service is unattractive to commuters and areas where the commuter market is suppressed due to lack of direct rail services, infrequent and poorly timed services, lack of car parking provision and poor access to rail stations.
 - Rail may be able to play a bigger role in alleviating social deprivation.
 - Rail services are not well integrated with the tourism market – mainly Blackpool and Cumbria
 - The current capability of the network in some areas constrains service improvements and future needs, for example slow maximum line speeds, speed restrictions.
 - Performance of a number of train services is poor due to outmoded infrastructure and tight timetables.
 - Interchange facilities are not fit for purpose and this could be a deterrent even when other gaps are addressed.
7. The RUS splits the area into three separate routes – Cumbrian Coast, Settle and Carlisle and Roses (Preston – Blackburn – Burnley line)
8. The following issues and options for the Roses route were considered:
 - Poor commuter services to Manchester and options for a direct service from Burnley, via Blackburn and Todmorden
 - The work on re-opening the Skipton – Colne line
 - Improvements to line speeds and performance on the Blackpool – Colne and the Blackpool– York lines.
 - A half-hourly (currently hourly) Blackpool – York service

9. From these options a short, medium and longer term strategy were developed. The elements relevant to Burnley and Pennine Lancashire are outlined in Appendix 1.

The Todmorden Curve

10. The most important recommendation for Burnley is that relating to the re-instatement of the Todmorden Curve. The strategy states:

“The business case for services on the alternative route from Burnley to Manchester via Todmorden only has a case if the capital cost of reinstating the chord at Todmorden can be met by a third party. If third party funding becomes available this option should be developed.”
11. The option appraisal was based partly on feasibility work, commissioned by BBC, by Faber Maunsell and Network Rail’s economic analysts. Based on the cost and market assumptions used in the work, it failed to demonstrate sufficient benefits to secure network rail funding support. However, Network Rail agree that the scheme makes sense in the context of the issues identified in the RUS and would support it if another body, for example the NWDA were to fund the scheme.
12. Through discussions with Network Rail, BBC were aware of the likely RUS outcome prior to its publication and had already commissioned Colin Buchannan Consultants to do some verification and refining work on the feasibility. Colin Buchannan have now reported back to the council. In brief, the outcomes are as follows:
 - A direct route via Blackburn appears to be unviable, as it wouldn’t provide attractive journey times to encourage a modal shift from cars to train.
 - A route via Todmorden would cost approximately £4million compared with an estimate of £8.2m provided in the previous report. This has two implications, firstly it gives the scheme a more favourable cost benefit analysis and it makes the scheme eligible for the Network Rail Discretionary Fund for schemes under £5million, subject to their being funding available after 2009/10.
 - The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is above the 1.5 threshold for inclusion in the Lancashire and Cumbria Rail Utilisation Strategy.
13. The results of the report have been informally presented to Network Rail, but need to be included in a formal response to the RUS.

National Stations Improvement Programme

14. Last year the government made available £150m for improvements to 150 intermediate stations. Network Rail and the relevant Train Operating Company (TOC) are responsible for identifying stations. Early discussions with Network Rail and Northern Rail have indicated to LCC that their priorities in Lancashire would include both Burnley Central and Burnley Manchester Road, although the RUS refers to Burnley Central and Burnley Barracks.
15. However, their initial indications are for a full upgrade to Burnley Central Station and for some “facelift” improvements to Manchester Road. LCC have expressed concerns at this approach their preference would be for more major improvements at Manchester Road,

including a staffed facility given its place on an inter-regional route, higher usage levels and its potential future role in a direct service to Manchester.

16. Earlier feasibility work, jointly commissioned by LCC and BBC, included proposals to upgrade the facilities and provide at both stations. Given the amount of capital available and even tighter revenue budgets this would not be possible. In order to provide a staffed facility at Manchester Road, Burnley Central station would have to be down graded to an un-staffed stop.
17. Economy Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the draft consultation response on 12th June 2008 and recommended it to the Executive.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

18. None at this stage.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

19. Securing a direct rail link to Manchester with a journey time of less than 45 minutes is identified as a key 10 year transformational project in Burnley's Future.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

20. Economy Scrutiny Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

21. Relevant Files in REDU

Lancashire and Cumbria Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation (April 2008)
Rail Access from East Lancashire to Manchester, Faber Maunsell (Dec 2007)
Manchester Direct Rail Scheme, Colin Buchanan (March 2008)

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT:

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ALSO:

Appendix 1

Short, Medium and Long Term Options for the Roses Route.

Short Term Strategy (2008 – 09)

Relatively few interventions will be instigated in this time. Key elements will include:

- Line speed improvements between Burnley Manchester Road and Hall Royd Junction. This will enable quicker journey times to Leeds, Hebden Bridge and will benefit a future direct scheme to Manchester via Todmorden.

Medium Term Strategy (2009 – 2014)

- Extend existing extra peak services between Victoria and Blackburn to a single location. Options are Clitheroe and Burnley, with current thinking favouring Clitheroe.
- The business case for services on the alternative route from Burnley to Manchester via Todmorden only has a case if the capital cost of reinstating the chord at Todmorden can be met by a third party. If third party funding becomes available this option should be developed.
- The business case for a half hourly service throughout the day between Victoria and Blackburn is not sufficiently strong. If other sources of funding are made available the business case should be reviewed.
- If a clear funding route can be identified, the case for reopening the Colne – Skipton railway might be developed further with a view to generating a robust business case, potentially leading to eventual implementation in the longer term (2010 – 19) or later. In the mean time, the alignment should be protected.

Appendix 2 - Draft Consultation Response to the Lancashire and Cumbria Rail Utilisation Strategy.

Burnley Borough Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Lancashire and Cumbria Rail Utilisation Strategy Consultation Draft. Burnley Borough Council and its partners believe that improving connectivity to nearby economic drivers particularly Manchester, but also Preston and Leeds are key to the economic and social regeneration of the Borough. Securing a direct rail service to Manchester, together with improved services to Preston and Leeds are identified as transformational projects in the Borough's Community Strategy – Burnley's Future.

In support of our aspirations the gap analysis (section 3.9) recognises that improved rail services have a significant role to play in alleviating social deprivation. Specifically, the need for improved journeys between Burnley/Nelson and Colne to York, Leeds, Manchester and Blackburn are identified. This is supported by Burnley Borough Council.

The gap analysis identifies the failings of a number of interchange facilities. The gap analysis does not highlight any of the issues arising at intermediate stations, including the very poor facilities at Burnley Manchester Road and Burnley Central Stations. In relation to this, table 4.2 identifies Burnley Central Station and Burnley Barracks station as priorities for National Station Improvements Programme funding. It is our view that funding should be focussed on Burnley Manchester Road station, given its high footfall, its place on the inter-regional route and potential future role in a direct service to Manchester.

In terms of the proposed strategy Burnley Borough Council welcomes proposals outlined at 7.2.3 to improve line speeds between Burnley Manchester Road and Hall Royd Junction in the short term.

With regard to the medium term strategy we are pleased that the need for a direct route to Manchester via a re-instated Todmorden Curve is included although it is disappointing that this is subject to the availability of third party funding. According to table 6.5, page 83 this conclusion has been reached on the basis of the work undertaken by Faber Maunsell on behalf of a consortium of local authorities including Burnley Borough Council. As a result of early discussions with Network Rail, Burnley Borough Council commissioned a further piece of work to check the results of the Faber Maunsell work and to re-appraise the Cost Benefit analysis using industry standard calculations. This work has been undertaken by Colin Buchanan with the following conclusions (a full copy of the report is attached):

- Faber Maunsell overestimated the engineering costs, including a turn back at Todmorden and a cross over at Accrington. Colin Buchanan believe that there is sufficient room in the time table for trains to cross at Todmorden without the turn back and that there are adequate cross over facilities already at Accrington. Colin Buchanan estimate engineering costs of £4.07m compared to £8.22m (see page 4 of the report)
- Running a semi-fast service, with a Manchester – Burnley journey time of 39 minutes would produce a BCR of 2.65
- A slower stopping services, with a high growth scenario used in the North West RUS would provide a BCR of 1.52

Burnley Borough Council would like to request that, as part of the consultation process, Network Rail re-consider their conclusions in light of this further research work. With a higher BCR we would like Network Rail to re-consider the funding options to meet all or some of the costs from their own budgets. We would also like Network Rail to re-consider option R5 in light of the revised BCR to secure extension of the Rochdale service to Burnley/Accrington rather than the conflicting proposals in R8.

Burnley Borough Council would also welcome the opportunity to work with Network Rail deliver the proposals.