



Yorkshire's plan for rail

Rail investment to unlock
prosperity in Yorkshire



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire



YORK
& NORTH
YORKSHIRE
COMBINED AUTHORITY

DAVID
SKAITH
MAYOR

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Foreword



It's time to back Yorkshire

I was very pleased to have been invited to act as the conduit for pulling together this long-overdue, comprehensive plan to bring the co-operation and therefore coordination that will be essential to transform Yorkshire's rail network.

For too long, Yorkshire has punched under its weight. It is time to come out fighting and to ensure that economic growth, productivity and prosperity are shared more equally across our country.

Yorkshire must be at the forefront of making infrastructure a driving force for regeneration, for housing and jobs, and for drawing on the talent of all our people.

Our history is a testament to what Yorkshire men and women can achieve, and now is the moment to turn the triumphs of the past into the ambition and delivery of the future.

Now the White Rose agreement, signed by the Mayors of West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and York and North Yorkshire, presents a once in a lifetime opportunity to deliver a credible and affordable plan to improve rail connectivity, and unlock economic growth and opportunities for all.

We want to create a truly integrated rail network, linking our major towns and cities, so people can easily get to wherever they need to go, be that work, education, training or leisure.

It's time to back Yorkshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Blunkett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Lord Blunkett

Mayors' foreword



People are at the heart of everything we do

Investing in our rail network is about making Yorkshire an even better place to live and work.

We want to put more money back in people's pockets and create the conditions so everyone can thrive. Improving our rail network is vital to help us unlock economic growth, create good quality jobs and reach our full potential.

We're being held back by creaking infrastructure. From new and improved stations to faster and more frequent services, we need a rail network fit for the 21st Century.

We know people do not live their lives within regional government boundaries. Our White Rose Agreement and Lord Blunkett's Rail Review will allow us to do things differently, setting out a bold, Yorkshire-wide rail plan that will deliver far-reaching and long-lasting benefits.

This report outlines how we can work with Government. We stand ready to deliver and want the Government to commit to our plan by investing so we can play our part in delivering the economic growth our region and our country needs.

We have huge ambitions for our region, and we need a transport network that unlocks our potential. We want to get all of us – our people, our communities, our businesses – to where we want to be.



Oliver Coppard
Mayor of South Yorkshire



Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire



David Skaith
Mayor of York and
North Yorkshire

Executive summary



The White Rose mayors are seeking investment in new trains and infrastructure, unlocking Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), enhancements to services and stations and a commitment to new ways of working through devolution.

The White Rose region, comprising West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, York and North Yorkshire, is home to 4.6 million people and 190,000 businesses. It has a resilient economy with world-leading assets and we are currently delivering investment programmes across our region and are ready for further delivery.

We are focused on long term, structural growth strategies to improve our region's economic performance. Our economy has lagged behind national levels for almost a century and this gap has worsened over time.

This report identifies the potential to add **£20 billion** to regional Gross Value Added (GVA) over a 10-year period if we performed at the national average.

There is also potential to generate **83,000 jobs** and a need to deliver **210,000 new homes**. Targeted rail investment has a critical role in helping to achieve these outcomes.

Economic prosperity and job creation would bring in more revenue for the Government and help reduce pressure on the public purse. Interventions and investments to help close this gap need to be **a national priority**.

We are a region of ambition. We need the Government to work with us to provide a transport system that delivers the economic prosperity, additional housing and regeneration our region needs. We also need the Government's support to deliver our Local Growth Plans to unlock the full potential of our region.

Our context for investment

Our growth challenge

The White Rose region is not meeting its growth potential with challenges across economic and social performance. Our regional economy is **£25 billion** smaller than it could be, and the gap is projected to widen.

Why rail is important

Rail connectivity is key as it can effectively and sustainably take large numbers of people and freight swiftly into the heart of our major economic centres and towns, increasing the connection between wealth-generating areas, their markets and areas that supply labour and services.

What do passengers and businesses want

Rail is underperforming across the White Rose region with aged rolling stock, poor network performance and reliability not meeting passengers and businesses needs. It is an unacceptable offer and a barrier for growth.

Our rail proposition

Across the White Rose region, we have a **credible and affordable** phasing plan that helps to fix our broken rail and transport network, and boost our economy with the potential to add **£20 billion** to regional GVA and generate **83,000** jobs.

Our Local Growth Plans

To close the productivity gap, we also need Government to support us on the delivery of our Local Growth Plans. These set out our plans to unlock growth and prosperity across all parts of the White Rose region.

Our rail proposition

New trains and sufficient rolling stock to deliver reliable services

One of the quickest ways of improving rail services in Yorkshire is to modernise the ageing rolling stock. A replacement programme would transform rail services with more modern, faster and greener trains, with more capacity and capability delivering faster journey times and attracting more customers. In particular, the Government needs to ensure there are sufficient new trains to deliver Transpennine route upgrade (TRU) services with 41 new bi-mode trains for TransPennine Express and Northern.

Infrastructure improvements to provide more capacity

Delivering a package of infrastructure improvements that are already in development and will deliver significant benefits to Yorkshire and the wider rail network, including platform extensions across the network, Midland Main Line electrification to Sheffield and 'no regrets' capacity schemes around Leeds, York and Sheffield.

Development of strategic schemes

Unlocking development funding for strategic schemes, key examples include Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) packages that will improve connectivity between Leeds and Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield, Sheffield – Manchester and a new central Bradford station.

Accessible stations and new stations

Delivering accessible and new stations that unlock development, housing and economic growth.

New / enhanced rail services

Providing frequency improvements to boost connectivity across the network. Examples include York – Scarborough, Sheffield – Leeds, Esk Valley, Penistone line, Wakefield and the five towns, Leeds – Goole, and Barnsley – London.

Rail devolution

Delivering rail integration and integrated public transport is constrained by the current rail industry structure. Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) will require meaningful, enhanced statutory powers and funding to deliver an integrated public transport network.

Our story

Yorkshire has played a pivotal role in shaping the UK's economy since the Industrial Revolution with the region's abundant natural resources in coal and iron ore spearheading the development of numerous industries.

Both the canal and the rail network played a crucial role in transporting raw materials to power mills and factories, moving finished goods and taking agricultural products to market, all boosting economic growth and contributing to the national economy.

South Yorkshire, and particularly Sheffield, supplied the world with high quality steel and cutlery. Doncaster built many famous locomotives including the Flying Scotsman and was an important railway town. Bradford was the global centre of the woollen textile industry, its mills powered by steam engines which revolutionised manufacturing. Leeds was synonymous with manufacturing with the largest clothing factory in the world and engineering works in the south of the city. York was the centre of the North's railways where trains were built for over a century and rail remains a key industry sector in the city. North Yorkshire benefited from the expansion of the railways, which connected urban centres to rural areas and the Yorkshire Coast, supporting agriculture and tourism.

The second half of the 20th century saw a decline in the traditional industries and an increase in road transport. Deindustrialisation led to a shift towards engineering, manufacturing and more recently technology and creative industries. The economy is increasingly moving towards specialisation and knowledge-based industries. As a result, the economy of the Yorkshire region is transforming

and growing in areas such as financial services, advanced manufacturing, education, culture, food production and green technologies.

The rail network across Yorkshire is significant in scale. While it may have served the Victorian region well, it is not geared up to supporting the development of knowledge-based industries, which requires human capital and the ability to move people at the times they want to travel, reliably, frequently and quickly into and out of urban centres. It is also not catered to serving the leisure market, which is growing at a faster rate currently than commuting and business travel. This requires better provision at weekends and improved connectivity to our rural communities.

Much of the network in Yorkshire was built by the Victorians and requires significant investment in upgrades and electrification to support a modern, knowledge-based economy, delivering sustainable growth and progression towards net zero.

Of course, Yorkshire is not an island. Rail connectivity between Yorkshire and key neighbouring economic areas, particularly to Greater Manchester and the wider North of England, the Midlands and London, is essential to realising our economic potential, refer to figure 1 on page 12.

Since publication of the Integrated Rail Plan in 2021, uncertainty has remained over the full delivery of NPR. We welcome the commitment to delivering TRU between Manchester, Leeds and York, but we must ensure the potential of TRU is maximised.

The White Rose region was the first area to lose High Speed 2 (HS2) following the cancellation of the HS2 Eastern Leg north of Birmingham, which means the work of the Midlands, Yorkshire and North East (MYNE) rail study is crucial in ensuring a strong eastern economic spine for the UK.

With this compelling economic backdrop for action and a national agenda for growth, Lord Blunkett, the mayors of York and North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire have joined together to present this report to the Government. This report is not just setting out the case for rail investment for our great region, it is also an **affordable and credible plan**.

One which provides our younger generations with hope and a future, something our supply chain could deliver and a plan that provides confidence for our businesses to invest. It can end years of uncertainty and make an immediate difference to our transport networks and economies, alongside a longer-term plan to drive further beneficial outcomes.

Pulling together local skills improvement plans and combining the investment of private enterprise with both national and devolved funding for public investment, it ensures that Skills England and the associated Government Industrial Strategy are dovetailed together in the interests of the whole country.

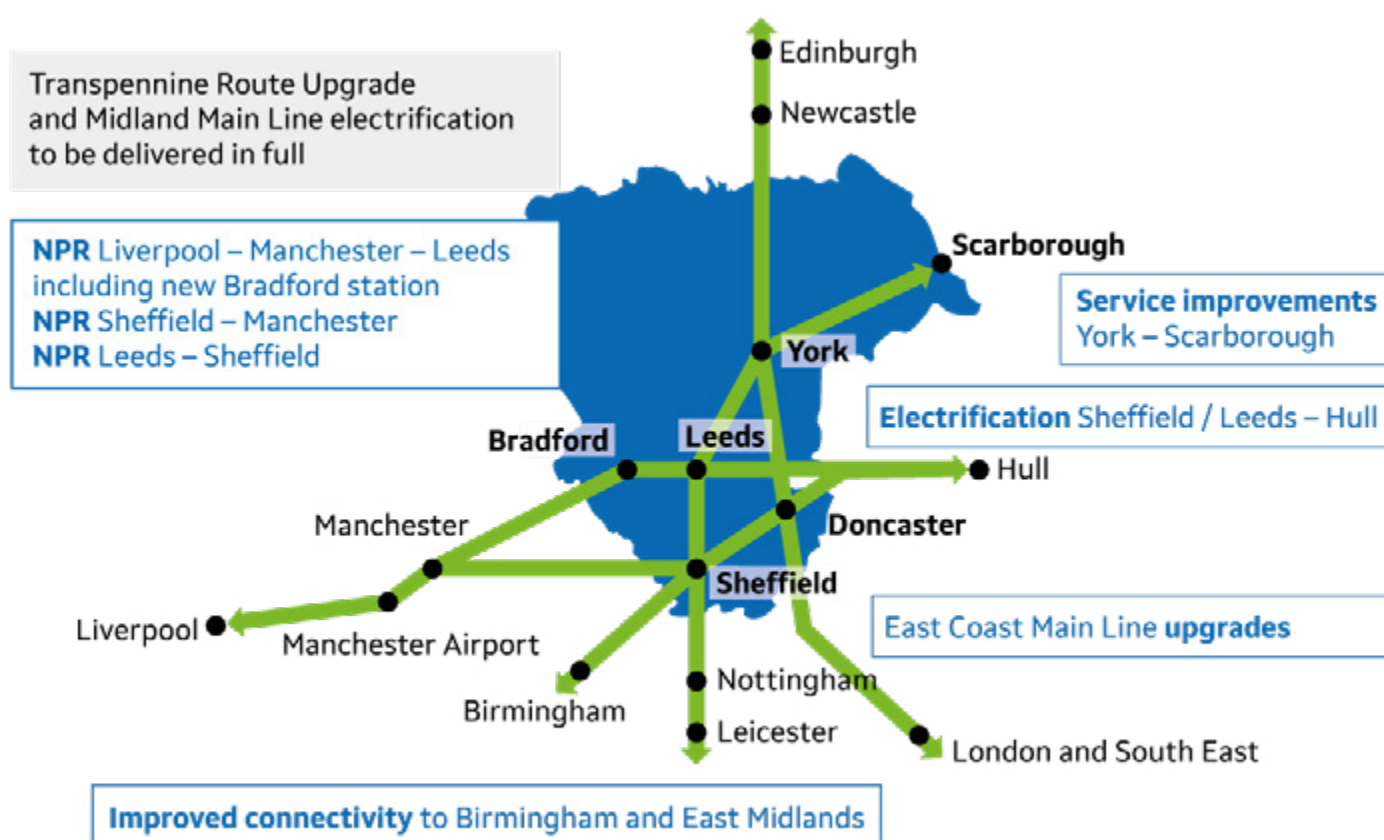


Figure 1 White Rose region and strategic transport links.

A new approach



Collaboration to deliver growth

Devolution is already working in the White Rose region with the three elected mayors. With rail devolution, Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) should have a statutory role to govern, manage, plan and develop the rail network.

We are pleased the Government recognises the crucial role of mayors. Indeed, mayors are in a unique position to integrate their railways with the local public transport network to support the delivery of their Local Transport Plans and Local Growth Plans and deliver what matters to their communities. Rail devolution through closer relationships with MSAs will enable the rail industry to make decisions as close as possible to the communities they serve.

A coordinated approach to linking bus with active travel, tram and train can be geared to ensuring the passenger is at the heart of modernisation and reform, making travel by public transport easier, safer and more comfortable, and therefore more attractive than using private cars.

The White Rose agreement takes rail devolution to another level, recognising the rail network operates beyond MSA boundaries. This new relationship will bring the regions closer to allow the three mayors to work collaboratively and beyond their geographical boundaries to develop a joint strategy.

This report is the start of this new approach and the first step in demonstrating the added value of partnership working across the region. The newly elected Mayor for Hull and East Yorkshire will be invited to join this new collaboration in due course.

A collaboration of four devolved entities would result in a critical mass of more than 5.2 million people, on par with the population of Scotland.

This will enable the Government and the railway industry to engage with local leaders in the most effective way while the relationship between the mayors allows them to reach consent in the most efficient way.

This report has been developed with input from the rail industry including Network Rail, Northern and TransPennine Express. We also aim to create a White Rose Rail Board involving mayors, the rail industry and the private sector to progress our plans even further.

We have made a start. **It is now for the Government and the region to join forces in a common endeavour to bring about transformation** to deliver our growth ambition.

The White Rose region



The White Rose economy covering North, West and South Yorkshire generates **£127 billion GVA** for the national economy and is larger than 10 European Union countries. It has a scale of national significance.

The population is growing in our region and has increased by more than half a million people (12%) in the past decade and has a total population of **4.6 million**. There are 2.1 million people employed across 188,700 businesses. Our region generates **more than 6% of national economic output**.

We have **11 universities**, with a total of 213,000 students and 71,000 graduates each year. This is supplemented by 18 further education colleges including the Leeds College of Building, currently the only specialist construction college in the UK.

The White Rose region is growing with populations in Bradford, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield and York exceeding the national growth average in 2023. **Bradford is the youngest metropolitan district in the UK** with 28.3% of its population under 20 years old, which could provide a valuable source of labour in the future.

The region needs to provide at least **210,000 new homes** over the next 10 years to meet national housing targets.



4.6 million population



11 universities

213,000 students, **71,000** graduates each year, **18** further education colleges



2.1 million workforce

Supporting **188,700** businesses



Three national parks

Tourism economy of **£4** billion



£127 billion GVA

Bigger than **10** EU countries



210,000 new homes

Over the next 10 years

The White Rose economy

The White Rose region has a resilient economy which provides a strong foundation for growth.

South Yorkshire

South Yorkshire is taking a lead in advanced manufacturing and innovation across robotics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and decarbonised industries. Its technology sector has increased by 700% in the last decade with start-ups raising significant venture capital. Its **Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID)** spans 2,000 acres along the Don Valley corridor linking Rotherham and Sheffield and is home to a cluster of more than 120 advanced manufacturing and technology firms employing more than 2,300 people. This area is also part of the **UK's first Investment Zone** and includes the Advanced Manufacturing Park, Olympic Legacy Park and New Town Cluster. By 2040, the district will create 4,000 new jobs, deliver 8,000 new homes and train an additional 2,000 apprentices.

Sheffield City Centre and Innovation Spine, with its plans for 20,000 new homes, is benefitting from the £470m 'Heart of the City' scheme, which is transforming the area for commerce, shopping, leisure and housing. The Sheffield Station Campus Masterplan is a blueprint to redevelop and enhance the area around Sheffield Midland Station to deliver new housing, offices and commercial development, including measures to improve access to the station for taxis and visitors as it is currently very congested.

The Dearne Valley area, which stretches from Barnsley Town centre to Rotherham, is identified as a major growth area for both residential development and businesses with an abundant supply of potential employment land.

Doncaster has huge allocations for employment and housing growth across the borough with key sites at Gateway East and Unity. Work to establish Doncaster Sheffield Airport as an operational airport continues at pace. South Yorkshire Airport City provides significant economic development opportunities for next generation industries maximising the benefits of connectivity by road, enhanced rail connectivity, air and ports.

West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire has a strong advanced manufacturing base with specialisms covering textiles, chemicals and green technologies, and 3,500 businesses working in digital and tech.

The West Yorkshire economy has grown faster than the national average over the last five years with a rise in knowledge-based industries including healthtech, fintech and the creative sector.

Leeds is the second largest financial centre in England after London and across Yorkshire with 145,000 people employed in financial services generating £11.8 billion for the region. The Local Growth Plan identifies opportunities across 11 sites with potential to deliver more than 900 hectares of employment land and more than 15,000 new homes. This includes the **Leeds Innovation Arc** which is a partnership to deliver a 21st century science and innovation park including 1,000 new jobs in the heart of Leeds. The **South Bank development** will double the size of Leeds city centre creating 4,000 new homes and 35,000 jobs close to Leeds Rail Station.

In **Bradford, the city village development** will deliver up to 1,000 new homes, as part of a wider city centre plan for 7,000 homes, supporting the growing knowledge economy sectors, bolstered by targeted technology skills programmes through the university. Bradford Council also has ambitious plans to extend the regeneration of the city centre into a 126-hectare **Southern Gateway**, including a new NPR station to deliver a 'King's Cross of the North', supported by the West Yorkshire Mass Transit system.

York and North Yorkshire

York and North Yorkshire is predominantly a rural and hospitality economy with a focus on agriculture, tourism, small-medium sized enterprises and has the largest concentration of food and drink manufacturers in the UK. It covers an area of outstanding natural beauty with two national parks and various seaside resorts.

The main centre, York, is not only a significant tourist destination with cultural and hospitality industries, it also has companies specialising in biotechnology, agritech, digital, creative and IT, rail and finance. The **York Central** development is the largest brownfield major development site in the UK with 2,500 houses and 6,500 jobs planned. The region has shown strong recovery post-pandemic with unemployment rates significantly below national averages.

Other examples of our economic assets are summarised in Appendix 1.

Our economic challenges

Despite having a £127 billion a year economy, we are facing long term, structural challenges to improve our economic performance.

The region's economy has fallen behind national levels for almost a century, with this gap worsening over time. Interventions and investments to close this gap need to be a **national priority**.

Our region's economy is **£25 billion smaller than it should be** with a productivity gap of £20 billion and a job gap equivalent to 83,000 jobs.

Part of the challenge is the **underperformance of several Yorkshire cities** as shown in figure 2. While Leeds and York outperform the national average, Sheffield, Bradford and Wakefield lag behind national levels. Improving this position is a priority.

There are **challenges in retaining young talent** due to a perceived lack of opportunities and significant pockets of deprivation with 23% of neighbourhoods in both West and South Yorkshire among the most deprived nationally. There are also pockets of deprivation across York and North Yorkshire where 6% of the population are among the 20% most deprived in England, including areas in and around Scarborough.

In a global economy, we need to ensure the White Rose region is well-connected to international gateways. We benefit from an internal network of airports offering strong links to Europe, which require enhanced connectivity. We also, however, require competitive connections to the international gateway of Manchester Airport, with the airport's own growth plans consistently identifying **poor rail connectivity to the Bradford and Sheffield economy** as a major constraint to its potential as an economic asset for the North.

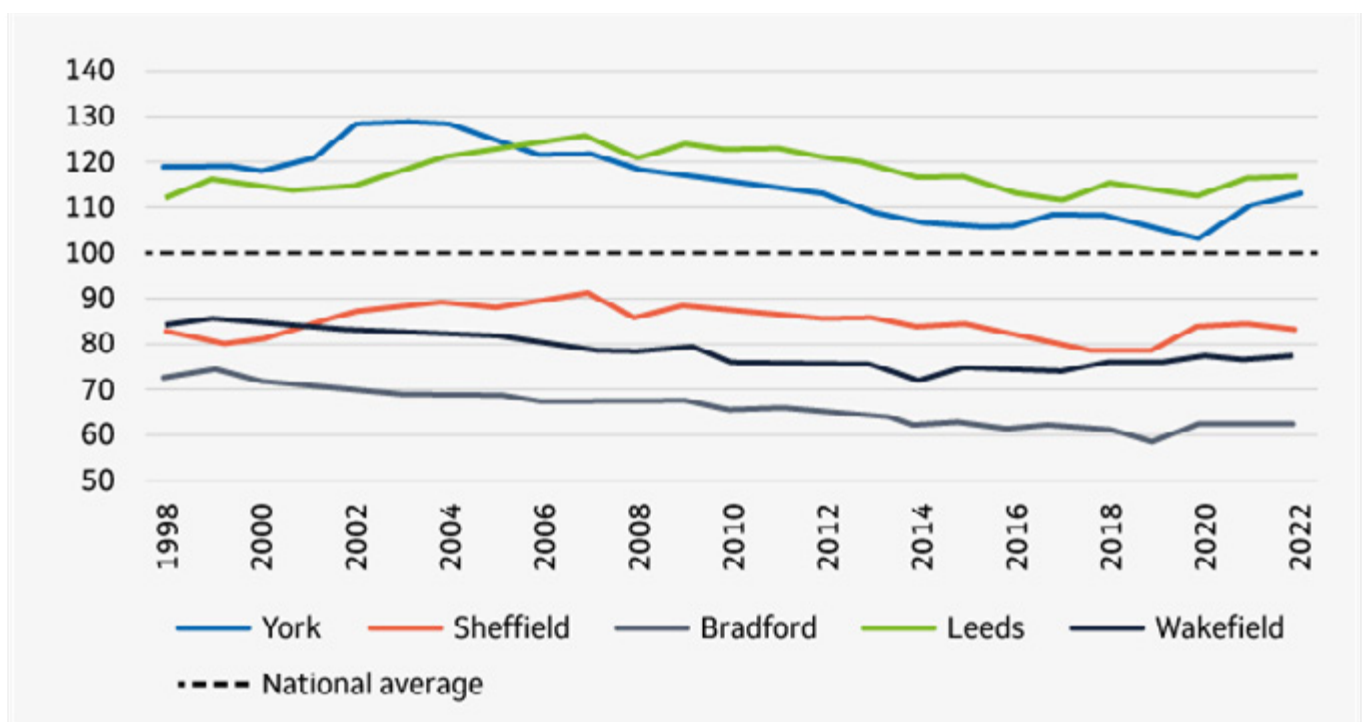


Figure 2 GVA per capita as a percentage of the UK – selected Yorkshire cities.



We need a **sustained programme of investment** similar to TRU across the White Rose region to address decades of underinvestment to reduce the productivity gap and generate economic growth, not only regionally but nationally.

Investment gap

Part of the productivity gap is driven by the lack of overall investment in the local economy. Based on data provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the total investment gap across both public and private sectors was £15.7 billion in Yorkshire when compared to the same nationally.¹

There is a significant gap in transport-related capital spending. The public annual transport expenditure per head in the White Rose region, including Hull and East Yorkshire, is 41% lower than the England average which is equivalent to a spending gap of £306m in 2017/18, as shown in figure 3.² The Institute for Public Policy Research North (IPPR North) looked at historic public transport spending per head over a period between 2008/9 and 2018/19, comparing funding in the North against London. It calculated that if investment had been the same, the North would have received £86 billion more.

We recognise the significant investment in TRU , which will improve connectivity between York, Leeds and Manchester by reducing journey times for fast services and increasing capacity for more intermediate services, will benefit communities across the North.

There are, however, still **significant connectivity challenges across the White Rose region**, particularly between Leeds and Sheffield, Sheffield and York, and on the East Coast Main Line (ECML).

Bradford remains disconnected from the TRU corridor and onward to Manchester, significantly constraining the realisation of the growth potential of Britain's youngest city. Much better connectivity is also required between **Sheffield to Manchester and Leeds / Sheffield to Hull**, as well as between **Scarborough and York**, which a package of NPR type improvements would deliver.

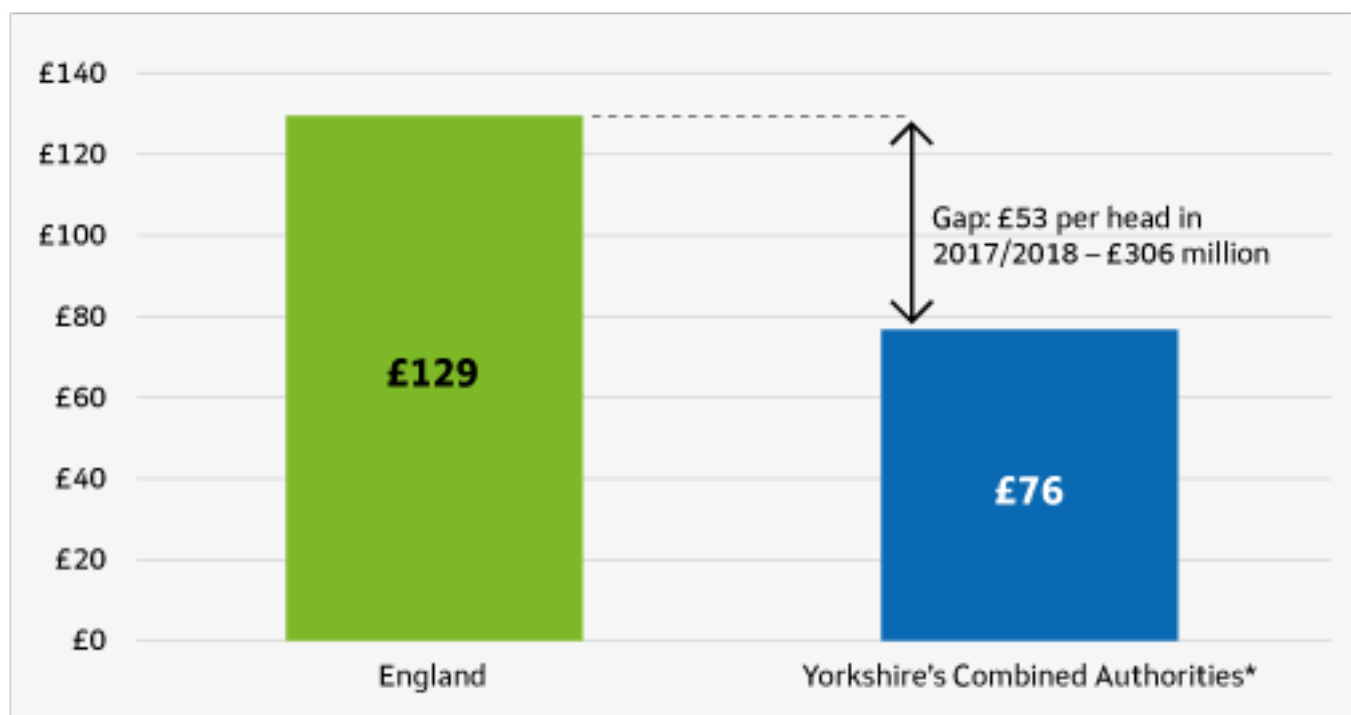


Figure 3 Capital public transport expenditure per head 2017-2018.

1. ONS, between 2009 and 2019.

2. [Click here to view the source on IPPR website](#)

Social exclusion

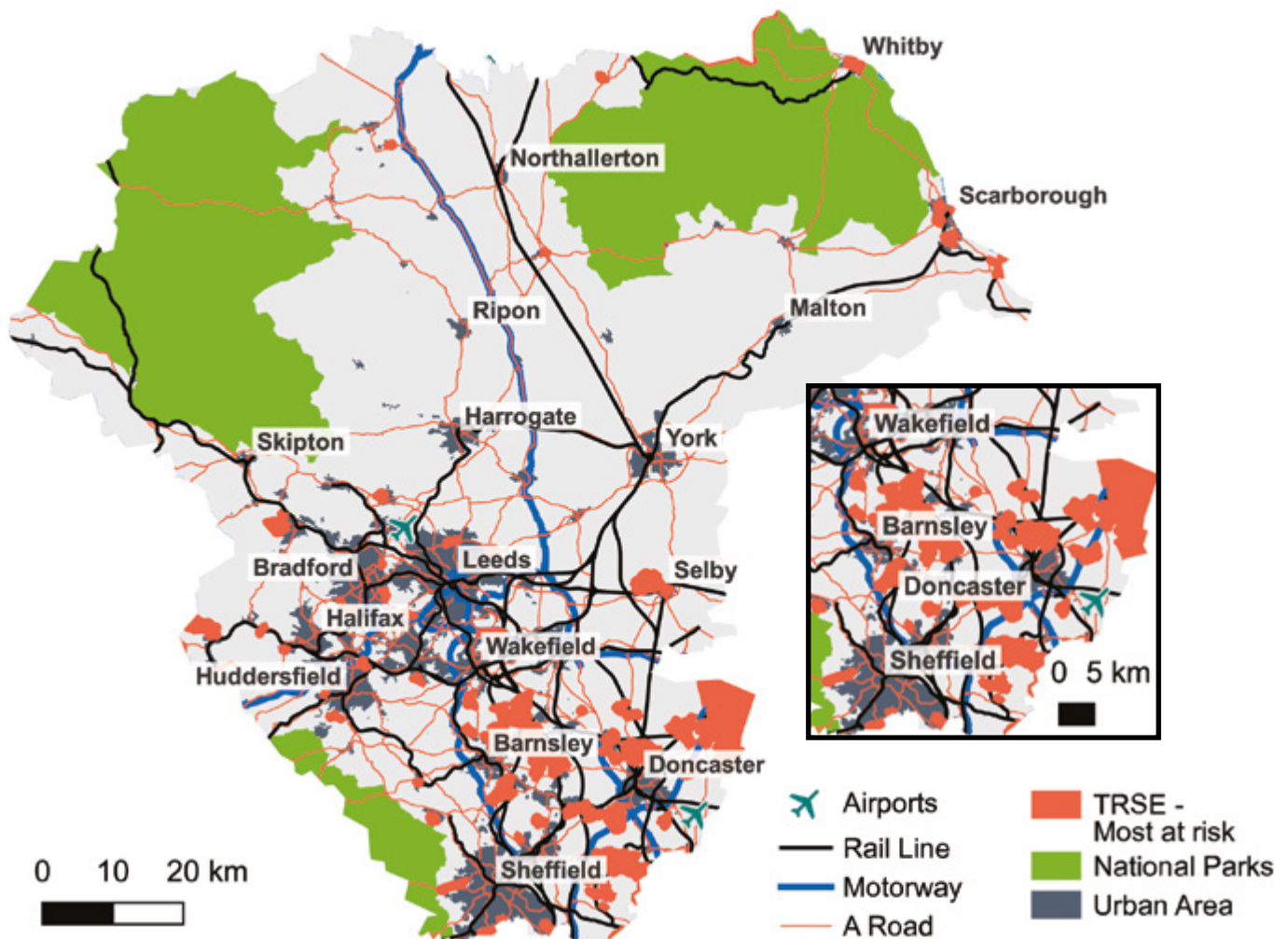


Figure 4 Transport Related Social Exclusion – most at risk locations (top 20%), based on data from TfN.

Communities in the White Rose region suffer from transport-related social exclusion (TRSE). In essence, this means people are prevented from participating in the opportunities and communities around them because of poor mobility and connectivity.

Based on research by Transport for the North (TfN) it is estimated that **12.1% of the White Rose region population live in areas where there is a high risk of social exclusion** because of issues with the transport network.³ This is equivalent to more than

half a million people. These areas are concentrated in former manufacturing and mining communities, coastal areas and in smaller towns and cities. In South Yorkshire 22% of the population are in the most at-risk categories and figure 4 highlights the impact of TRSE on communities in and around Barnsley, Sheffield and Doncaster. Across the rest of the White Rose region there are several areas in and around Scarborough, Selby, Todmorden and Keighley that also suffer from high rates of TRSE.

3. [Click here to view the article on the TfN website](#)

Our skills and productivity gaps

Skills are central to the Government's Industrial Strategy and achieving the 80% employment rate outlined in the Get Britain Working white paper.⁴ There is a **positive correlation between productivity and skills**. Productivity drives income growth and living standards. A highly skilled work force is fundamental to achieve productivity goals.

In the White Rose region, **the number of people with higher level qualifications is lower than the national average** (47.1%). Only Barnsley, Doncaster and Wakefield are in the bottom 10 nationally for residents with high-level qualifications (above A Level or equivalent). In Wakefield 28.8% have a high-level qualification compared to 74.3% in Oxford. In **Doncaster 19.6% of the population have no formal qualifications** which is the worst rate in the country compared to 3.2% of the population in Cambridge.

Cities with lower skills are less productive with lower GVA per hour, lower average weekly wages and lower employment rates. This is highlighted in table 1 which compares Barnsley, Doncaster and Wakefield to some of the most productive cities in the UK.

City / Town	GVA per hour	Wages	A Level or above	No qualifications	Employment rate
Barnsley	£27.80	£613	33.4%	9.5%	72.5%
Doncaster	£25.70	£604	29.9%	19.6%	77.2%
Wakefield	£30.80	£647	28.8%	6.8%	74.9%
Edinburgh	£43.20	£786	69.9%	4.2%	78.6%
Cambridge	£41.10	£848	63.7%	3.2%	69.7%
Oxford	£36.30	£777	74.3%	4.6%	77.8%

Table 1 data sourced from centre for cities. ⁵

4. [Click here to view the paper on the Government website](#)

5. [Click here to view the data source online](#)

Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

TRU is the biggest investment in the region, employing more than 5,000 people across 70 active work sites. It is a White Rose priority to retain and further develop this high-skilled workforce through a credible infrastructure investment plan. This will mean we have the capability and skills to deliver transport, infrastructure, employment and housing programmes in the future.

Growth and Skills Levy

The development of a comprehensive skills proposal is vital to facilitate major infrastructure investment and achieve net zero and ambitious housing development. This would involve bringing together further and higher education with private providers to facilitate use of the Growth and Skills Levy and boost a pipeline of young people with the training needed to get and retain jobs and enable people to learn and earn.

Pathways to Work

Extending the Pathways to Work trailblazer, initiated in Barnsley, to Bradford and beyond will be important in addressing the large number of young people who are not currently in education, employment and training.



Our Local Growth Plans

To close the productivity and skill gaps, we need Government to support us on the delivery of our local growth plans.

West Yorkshire

The West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan covers the **next 10 years**. It will boost prosperity and align with the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy by identifying **key sectors for growth and clusters of opportunity**. This has the potential to add a third to our regional GVA and we are on track to invest £7 billion as part of our Local Growth Plan.

To unlock growth in West Yorkshire, we need to maximise the benefits of agglomeration which is the geographic concentration of knowledge-based industries. Our growth plan therefore focuses on three corridors of opportunity connecting major urban centres and areas of economic strength in West Yorkshire and beyond.

The Eastern corridor will be a catalyst for specific economic opportunity in high growth sectors in Leeds, through the Aire Valley and into Wakefield and its Five Towns. This includes bespoke, specialised and grow-on space, and emerging tech opportunities in Ferrybridge and Skelton Grange, where there is significant investment planned in



Aerial view of Bradford, West Yorkshire

a new hyperscale data centre run by Microsoft. The Eastern corridor will bolster connections between Leeds, Wakefield and South Yorkshire, with its strengths in advanced manufacturing, increasing the agglomeration benefits.

The Western corridor between Leeds and Bradford offers the most compelling growth opportunities, as it has the biggest commuter flows between any two UK cities. Sitting just eight miles apart, the proximity of the region's two key cities is truly unique. They have a combined population close to 1.3 million – bigger than Birmingham (the UK's second-largest city).

Unlocking the opportunity in Bradford through major infrastructure improvements, regeneration and opportunities such as UK City of Culture 2025 is key to driving growth in West Yorkshire.

The Southern corridor is centred on the major urban extensions of Dewsbury Riverside and Leeds Southbank, which will be connected via Mass Transit in the future. Leeds South Bank – one of the largest regeneration programmes in Europe – will deliver 35,000 jobs and 4,000 new homes, with flagship cultural elements including British Library North. Investment in this corridor will sit alongside the £11 billion TRU programme transforming connectivity in this corridor.



Aerial view of Bradford, West Yorkshire

York and North Yorkshire

York and North Yorkshire will be a **trailblazer for sustainable, innovation-led growth** and the **transition to carbon negative** across our urban, rural and coastal communities, ultimately supporting national ambitions – feeding, powering and connecting the UK.

Growth will be achieved through **targeting sectors where we are most competitive**. This includes **food and farming innovation**, working with the largest concentration of food and drink manufacturers in the UK, and innovation assets (including the National Agritech Centre HQ). Our **engineering biology and life sciences** position the region to become a science superpower through a strong academic base at the University of York. **Clean energy** and opportunities to develop geothermal energy and working with the existing biomass Drax Power Station in Selby and **Rail Innovation**, backed by a 160-year history of providing solutions to the rail industry.

The significance of each of these sectors is underpinned by our **strong science base, world-renowned heritage**, and natural capital with two National Parks, three National Landscapes and a distinct coastline.

Growth ambitions will also require resilience within our foundation sectors, including the visitor economy, which is a significant employer; manufacturing and its supply chain contributions; and valuing the role of our small businesses, 89% of which have less than 10 employees.

York and North Yorkshire is starting from a **strong baseline**, with the highest skill levels in the North. But some of our foundations need fixing to ensure people are not left behind. There are excellent North-South transport connections by both road and rail, but limitations to the connectivity within the region elsewhere. Poor public transport links mean that most major employment areas are accessible only to nearby communities, restricting opportunities for workers from further afield. The reliance on localised rail and bus services creates isolated commuting zones, making it difficult for people to travel efficiently between our towns and cities.



Aerial view of Selby, North Yorkshire



Aerial view of Sheffield, South Yorkshire

South Yorkshire

Historically reliant on coal mining and steel manufacturing, South Yorkshire experienced a significant economic decline with the loss of these traditional industries. This transition left the region grappling with issues such as low productivity, limited economic complexity and underinvestment in infrastructure. These challenges have hindered inclusive growth and contributed to income disparities and a reliance on low-wage, non-tradable sectors.

To address these issues, four key growth areas have been identified to revitalise the region's economy and improve people's quality of life

- **Sheffield City Centre and the Innovation Spine**, aimed at making the area a hub for advanced manufacturing and digital innovation.
- **South Yorkshire Airport City**, focused on transforming Doncaster Sheffield Airport into a global logistics and aerospace hub.

- **The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District across Rotherham and Sheffield**, promoting cutting-edge industry collaboration.
- **Barnsley Town Centre**, where regeneration efforts will improve infrastructure, housing, and public services.

These areas have been strategically chosen to attract investment, create high-quality jobs, and stimulate long-term economic growth.

Underpinning our proposals is a **strong commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth**. If we are to close the productivity gap between South Yorkshire and the national average, investment in transport, skills, and social infrastructure is required to ensure all residents can benefit. Through innovation, regeneration, and improved connectivity, our growth story is focused on building a more resilient, fair and future-ready economy.

Analysis suggests that closing the gap with national average productivity level (outside of London) would add **18% to the South Yorkshire economy**.⁶

6. [Click here to view the plan online](#)

Our rail network



Key challenges

94.7 million entrances and exits at 146 stations were recorded across the White Rose region between April 2023 and March 2024. Leeds was the busiest station with 24.9 million passengers.

Our rail system is underperforming across the region with life expired rolling stock, poor network performance and reliability, and services not meeting the needs of our passengers and businesses. **Our current rail offer is not acceptable, and is a barrier for growth.**

Poor performance and reliability

Nationally, Leeds is by far the worst location across the UK in terms of the total minutes delay as indicated in figure 5.

Sheffield, York and Bradford Interchange also feature in the top 10 worst locations on the network. Delays at Leeds ripple across the entire rail network in the North. Previous analysis by TfN indicated one third of all delays across the North were caused at Leeds due to its lack of capacity both within and on approaches to the station. The same issue also applies at Sheffield, Bradford Interchange and York. As a result, only 34% of services ran to time at Bradford Interchange, 44% at York, 50% at Sheffield and 54% at Leeds compared to the national average of 68%.⁷

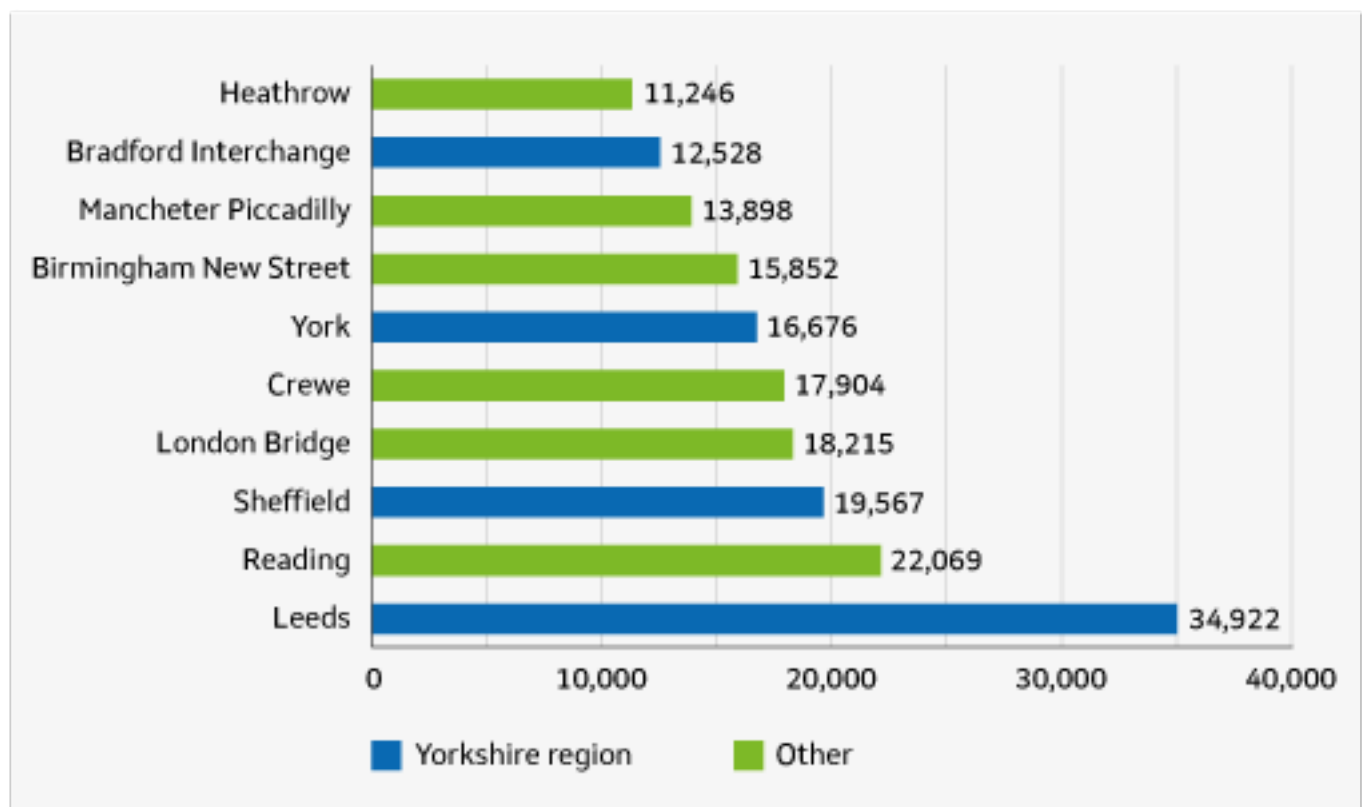


Figure 5 Total minutes of delay caused by lost path - regulated for another later running train (2023). Network Rail delay attribution data provided by Bradford Council.

7. This is number of services that operated to time over a 12-week period covering January – March 2025 based on data from on-time trains.

Reliability has been identified a key barrier for more people taking the train by the Department for Transport (DfT) ⁸

‘A lack of consistency in reliable services as delays and cancellations mean people miss days of work, hospital appointments or social events.’

There are also capacity issues on other parts of the network including Doncaster, which is an important regional hub and if not addressed could constrain development of new services here and on the ECML.

Addressing rail capacity issues at Leeds, Sheffield, York and Bradford Interchange is critical.

Improving capacity issues at these locations will improve reliability and capacity across the White Rose region and the national rail network.

Slow journeys, infrequent trains, limited seats

Leeds and Sheffield currently face a stark difference in terms of city-to-city connectivity when compared to places with similar combined populations, distances apart and GVA . Evidence suggests travel between the cities is only **one third of what we should expect** when compared to other city pairs, as detailed in table 2.

Edinburgh and Glasgow, which have similar population sizes to Leeds and Sheffield, have substantially better transport links. The rail connection is seen as being vitally important to the economic, industrial and social life of Scotland. Each year 1.6 million people travel between the two cities, while only 641,444 make a similar journey between Sheffield and Leeds.

If services were improved to match other city-pairs we would expect more than one million additional trips between Leeds and Sheffield per annum with effective intercity connections unlocking significant agglomeration benefits.

It's a similar situation when comparing **Sheffield – York** and Liverpool – Manchester. While the GVA and combined population are less for the Sheffield – York corridor, the trip rate is far lower as a result

of the lack of fast services. There are only five fast services a day at present, compared to four per hour between Liverpool and Manchester, and limited seated capacity on this corridor.

Improving the Leeds - Sheffield and Sheffield – York services, and connectivity to Bradford is critical.

We need faster journey times and more frequent services with sufficient seat capacity.

Bradford has no direct services to Sheffield and is connected to York by an hourly semi-fast service. The poor connectivity between these three Yorkshire cities is reflected in the extremely low annual trips per person ratio which is just 0.1 between Bradford and York, and 0.03 between Bradford and Sheffield.

8. [Click here to view the DfT article online](#)

City pairs corridor data		Leeds to Sheffield	Leeds to York	Sheffield to York	Bradford to York	Bradford to Sheffield	Liverpool to Manchester
Journey time (mins)	Fast	43	24	50	n/a	n/a	34
	Semi-fast	56	n/a	68	51	81-88 mins	51
Frequency per hour	Fast	1	4	5 per day	n/a	n/a	4
	Semi-fast	2	n/a	1	1	2 (indirect)	-
Number of trips (2024)		641,444	1,215,750	240,130	73,270	39,134	1,883,648
Daily capacity (seats)		17,448	39,574	11,496	3,246	17,448	45,112
Combined city population		1,388,725	1,027,034	770,793	757,195	1,118,886	1,065,766
Combined GVA (£m 2023)		47,640	39,591	23,313	19,043	27,092	48,199
Trips per person		0.46	1.18	0.31	0.10	0.03	1.77

Table 2 City pairs corridor based on methodology used in the Midlands, Yorkshire, Northeast Study - source West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

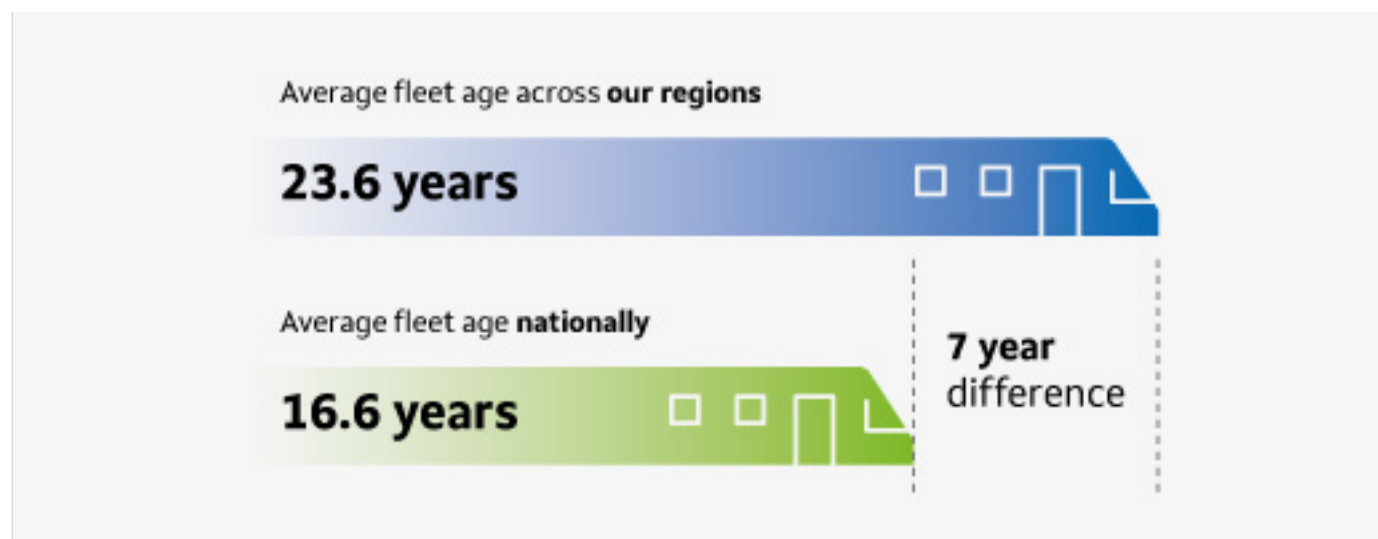
Since the previous Government abandoned its strategic rail plan as part of its decision to cancel the Northern leg of HS2, there has been a lack of cohesive strategy for rail investment across the North. We recognise the case for investment between Liverpool and Manchester, but the case for rail investment to the east of the Pennines is equally strong to complete the east and west connectivity.

We must ensure there is a plan to properly deliver the capacity upgrades and electrification to realise the full economic benefits of east and west connectivity across the Pennines, enabling cities in the North to thrive and connect as a true Northern Arc.

A programme of investment across the White Rose region is critical to maximise the benefits of TRU and future NPR, including establishing the Bradford – Huddersfield TRU /NPR link.

This will unlock the economic potential of the North.

Summary of our key issues



Aged and life expired rolling stock

Northern Rail, which operates most of the services across our regions, has an average fleet age of 23.6 years compared to 16.6 years nationally. Older rolling stock is more prone to breakdowns, impacting service reliability and contributing to delays. It does not provide an attractive public transport offer to people and leads to low passenger satisfaction.

Lack of consistency in service frequency

Some urban areas have a good service with frequent modern trains, such as those connected to Leeds by the Airedale / Wharfedale lines. Many, however, are poorly served with an hourly service and old rolling stock, such as communities in Wakefield and the five towns.

Lack of early and late trains

In some areas you cannot use rail to commute to work (Esk Valley, Sherburn in Elmet) and in others you cannot go on a night out (towns and villages on the Yorkshire Coast Line). This impacts businesses, access to jobs and the nighttime economy.

Service offer is not aligned with the polycentric nature of the White Rose region

Apart from connectivity between our major urban centres, we must not forget about the connections between other centres, often more 'orbital', such as the Penistone Line between Sheffield and Huddersfield or the Leeds – Harrogate – York line. Many towns and rural areas lack adequate transport options, and we need to ensure they are better connected to maintain sustainable and vibrant communities. The lack of rail connectivity from Barnsley to Rotherham and Doncaster or direct services from Bradford for example highlight this problem applies to large urban centres as well.

Poor off-peak and weekend services

This significantly limits journey opportunities and does not reflect the increase in off-peak / evenings and weekend travel, especially with the growth in leisure travel and staycations. Examples include one train every two hours on Yorkshire Dales services and a lack of early morning services on Sundays.

Lack of joined up timetabling at interchange nodes between rail services and between rail and bus

This leads to long waits and slow end to end journey times, which is a particular problem on Sundays and evenings. This includes signposting and wayfinding between transport hubs, seamless ticketing and the availability of bus timetables in rail stations and vice versa.

Slow journeys

Studies suggest a rail journey needs to be at least 20% faster compared to the equivalent car journey between centres to make it attractive to motorists but this is often not the case.

Lack of electrification

At present only 26% of the West Yorkshire network is electrified compared to 42% of the network nationally. Sheffield is the only one of the core cities to have no electric train services.

As a result, compared to other regions, **rail in our region has a lower modal share of total journeys over a mile**. This is 1.2% in Yorkshire & the Humber compared to 1.6% in the North-West and 2.2% in the South East (excluding London which is 17%).



New opportunities for rail growth



Northern and TransPennine Express jointly commissioned a market headroom study to assess what additional rail demand is possible across the North. The study demonstrated that **demand for rail in the Yorkshire and Humber region could be more than doubled** if several constraints, such as price, performance and convenience, were addressed, as highlighted in figure 6.

The study suggests an additional **£431m of potential rail revenue** could be achieved as a result of increased demand across the whole of Yorkshire. This indicates the size of the prize if the rail services are improved.

Why people travel by rail is changing and new research from the DfT highlights that **54% of rail passengers are travelling for leisure purposes** and 61% of passengers travel for leisure at least once per month.

Commuting is still an important market – 30% travel for this purpose with Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday being the most popular days.⁹

The **leisure market** is an opportunity that could provide significant growth on rail if services are improved. Yorkshire has a diverse range of cultural attractions that could drive growth – from world-class museums and historical sites to vibrant arts and cultural events, including Bradford UK City of Culture 2025.

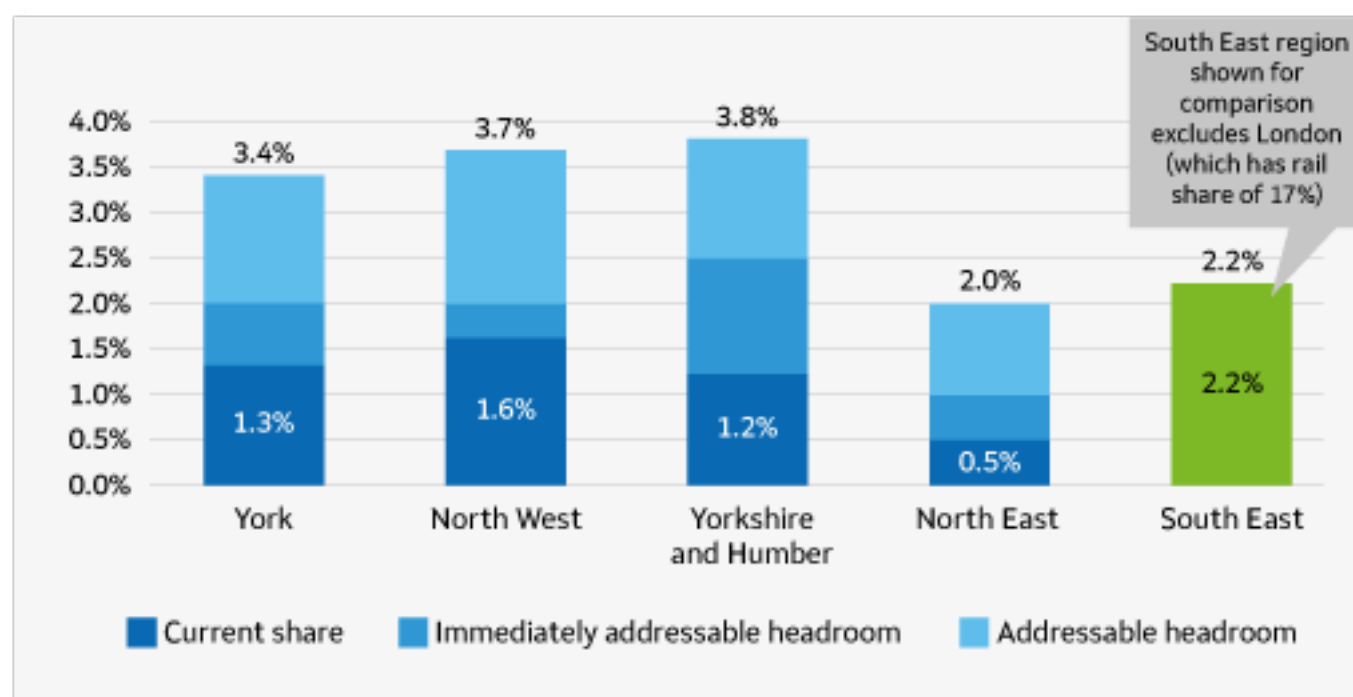


Figure 6 Current and potential rail modal share.

⁹ [Click here to view the DfT article online](#)

A flavour of what is on offer

Museums

National Rail Museum in York, the Royal Armouries in Leeds, National Science & Media Museum in Bradford, Eureka! – the National Children’s Museum in Halifax and Kelham Island Museum in Sheffield.

Historical sites

Such as York, Ripon, Saltaire, Haworth, Whitby, Castle Howard, Wentworth Woodhouse and Fountains Abbey.

Stunning scenery

Three national parks – Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and the Peak District – as well as the Yorkshire Coast and the Pennine Moors.



Sporting and music events

Numerous sporting attractions covering football, rugby league and union, cricket, snooker and ice hockey, as well as arenas including the First Direct Arena in Leeds and Utilita in Sheffield for music events.

Theatres

In Leeds, the Grand Theatre and Opera House, City Varieties Music Hall and the Playhouse. In York, the Grand Opera House and Theatre Royal. In Sheffield, the Crucible and Lyceum Theatre. In Bradford, the Alhambra Theatre and in Scarborough the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

There is huge opportunity for growing the rail market to reduce subsidy from the Government if we can remove the barriers to travel and provide an improved rail offer to support our region’s rich culture and leisure offer.



What improving the rail offer means to Yorkshire

More opportunities

Create greater opportunities for our people by providing improved connectivity for those without access to a car.

Connect young people to jobs

Give our growing young population much better access to increasing numbers of jobs, and high-skill businesses a wider regional labour pool.

Businesses will want to be here

Provide a **real incentive for potential employers to relocate** to the region.

Deliver local growth

Help **deliver significant growth in several key sectors** and especially in knowledge-based industries.

Promote sustainable travel

Provide **more sustainable travel** between the cities and across our region, and an integrated network will **promote greater public transport use** and **more active travel**.

Help with net zero targets

Help take vehicles off our roads, cutting carbon emissions, improving air quality, and contributing to our net zero ambitions.

Rail connectivity is the answer to close the productivity gap

Rail connectivity has a crucial role to play in closing the productivity gap. Rail has a particular advantage because it can efficiently and sustainably move large numbers of people and freight swiftly into the heart of major economic centres and towns, effectively increasing the connection between wealth-generating areas, their markets, and areas that supply labour and services. This is the essence of agglomeration.

The National Infrastructure 'Rail Needs Assessment report' highlighted that despite population growth in many of the North's largest cities, there is a significant lag in terms of productivity between the Midlands and the North when compared to London and the South East.¹⁰ This evidence is reinforced by the 2023 update to the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review and the Government's own economic data.

The Rail Needs Assessment report cites the slow and unreliable services between the major cities and towns in the North as a factor in low productivity, compared to London and Reading which have trains running at double the speed of those between major cities in the North.

The report also says there is **a strong strategic case for investing more in rail** as part of a wider regional growth strategy, and that improving rail in the Midlands and the North will also improve the entire UK rail network.

The report states the Government should focus rail investment on places that can have the most impact rather than spreading investment too thinly. This can be achieved by:

- Increasing the density of clusters of people and businesses.
- Facilitating business between cities.
- Making places more attractive to live and work in.
- Acting as an anchor for commercial investment by signalling an area is worth investing in.

While investing in bus and tram networks is crucial in supporting growth in the region, improving connectivity between cities with major centres is more effective through rail. **Rail connectivity plays a key role in connecting people with jobs and enabling economic growth.** Investment in the rail network also supports progression towards a net zero economy, as well as improving air quality, especially when local rail services are fully integrated with the local public transport and active travel networks.

10. [Click here to view the report online](#)

Economic value of rail in the region

Significant economic value is added by rail to the region, including through:

- The benefits to passengers who use the network, whether for work, leisure or other purposes.
- The direct economic value of employment in the sector and its supply chain.
- The environmental benefits of removing cars from the road.
- The social value such as apprentices, skills and volunteering.

The total annual economic value generated from passenger journeys and taking cars off the road in the region is approximately £850 million.

In addition, train operators and Network Rail employ about 6,500 people, and spend in the region of £550m on suppliers. Enhancing rail and driving increased passenger growth will further add to this positive impact.



Case study

Leeds – Sheffield, a corridor of opportunity

While there has been strong growth in rail demand across the UK over the past 20 years especially on interregional services, this corridor has seen little, if any, investment despite a growing combined population of 1.4 million people and a GVA approaching £50 billion.

Collaboration is needed to drive innovation and technology advances, and help support advanced manufacturing, digital, professional and financial services, and the creative industries which these cities specialise in. The two cities are driving plans for **globally significant innovation clusters**, to harness existing strengths by nurturing further growth, and building even better links between businesses and universities.

To collaborate, people need to connect easily, but the current offer of overcrowded, infrequent and unreliable rail services between two of the UK's

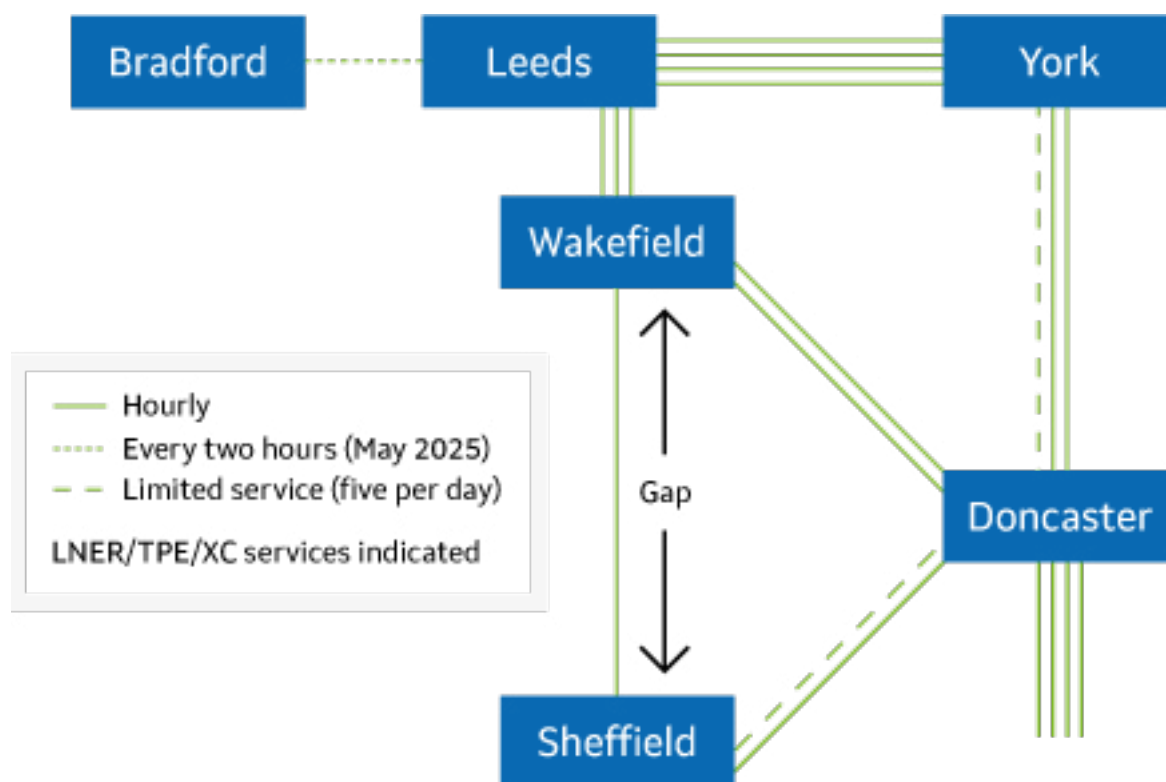
largest cities puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to other city pairs, both nationally and internationally.

The connectivity gap is indicated in figure 7, with only one fast train between Sheffield and Leeds per hour compared to four services an hour between Liverpool – Manchester, Birmingham – Coventry, and Glasgow – Edinburgh.

It also emphasises how poorly connected Bradford is, with **no direct services between Bradford and Manchester Piccadilly, Manchester Airport and Sheffield**, and only an hourly semi-fast service to York.

Train journeys between the two cities are slow and infrequent with poor reliability and punctuality. This connectivity gap is holding back growth on this corridor and many of the issues identified also apply to the Sheffield - York corridor.





Other city pairs (fast direct services)

Liverpool – Manchester _____ 2	Birmingham – Coventry _____ 4
Leeds – Manchester _____ 4	Newcastle – York _____ 4
Glasgow – Edinburgh _____ 4	Bradford – no direct services to Sheffield

Open access operators not shown

Grand Central: Bradford – Wakefield via Halifax – Doncaster – London KGX (four per day)
Grand Central: Sunderland – York – Doncaster – London KGX (five per day)
Hull Trains: Hull – Selby – London KGX (five per day)

Northern also operate semi-fast services

Bradford – Leeds – York (one per hour)
Leeds – Sheffield via Barnsley (two per hour)

Figure 7 City Pairs – Fast direct services – White Rose region.



The Leeds – Sheffield corridor issues

- Mix of slow, semi-fast, fast and freight on a predominantly two track railway with little capacity to run additional services.
- Persistent overcrowding on CrossCountry and Leeds to Lincoln/Nottingham via Sheffield services compounded by constraints at platform 17 at Leeds, which prevents trains longer than two carriages running.
- Poor offer for passengers with no catering or first-class provision on many services compared to other intercity corridors.
- Insufficient capacity also to increase services between Sheffield – Doncaster – York along this corridor.
- Constraints within Sheffield and Leeds stations and on the approaches to both stations means there is little capacity for future growth.

The 2011 census data indicates that 41,536 people commuted daily between Leeds and Sheffield and that car travel dominated the market with an 88% modal share compared with 6% by rail. Currently the M1 motorway, which suffers from significant congestion at peak times carries an excess of 100,000 vehicles a day north of Sheffield. Carbon emissions for the journey between the two cities are more than three times higher for a car journey than a rail journey.

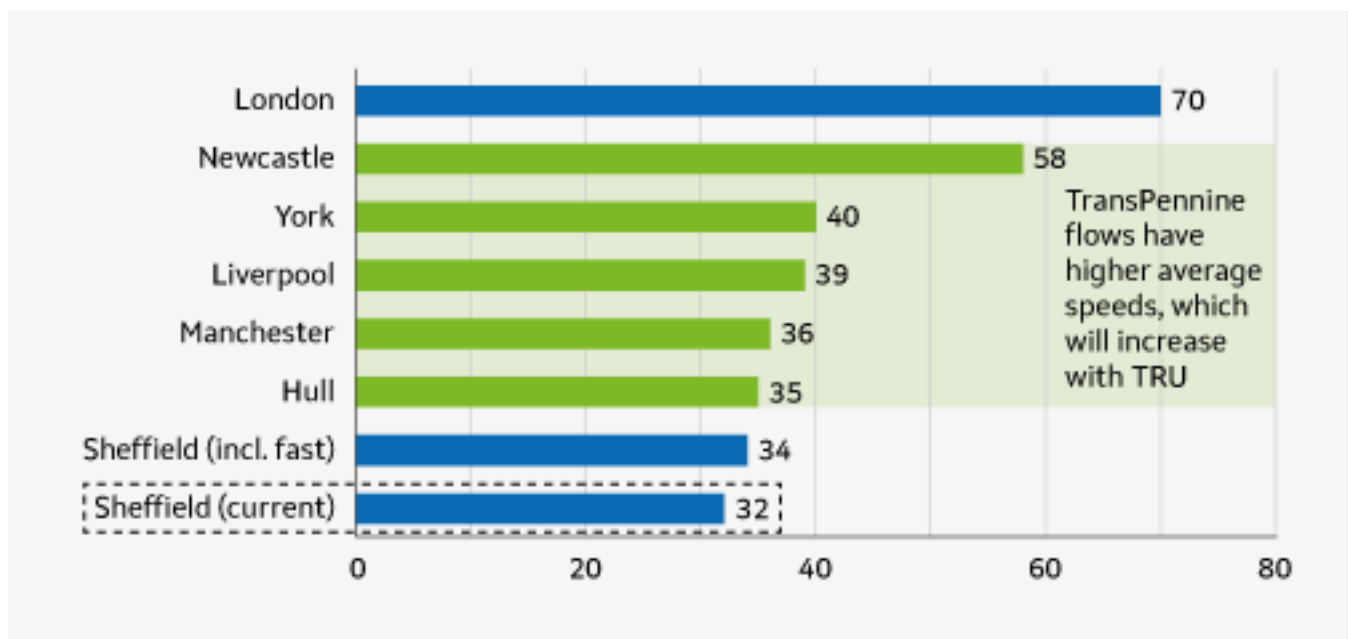


Figure 8 Average intercity rail speeds from Leeds to other cities (data from Northern).

The current rail provision of one fast service per hour with several semi-fast services taking 60 minutes does not provide an attractive rail offer, but it does highlight the potential scale of **suppressed demand for rail**.

Figure 8 highlights average speeds between Leeds and Sheffield are notably slower compared to TransPennine Express and Leeds – London services.

Sheffield is the only one of the core cities to have no electric train services, with older diesel rolling stock providing a poor passenger experience and significantly contributing to air pollution in the city. The electrification of Midland Main Line is long overdue and the opportunity to accelerate this essential upgrade must be explored.

Yorkshire is not
standing still



Our public transport network is not working. We are taking active steps to ensure it will work for our residents, communities and businesses, and to support our housing, investment, skills and employment programmes.

In West Yorkshire, **we are investing more than £200 million in our rail network** and we are delivering phase one of our mass transit network with spades in the ground by 2028 to connect Leeds and Bradford with a tram route. Our bus network will be fully franchised by the end of 2028 with better, greener buses.

In South Yorkshire, **we have invested £25 million of our devolved funding** into our rail network complementing **rail industry investment of £150 million** in major enhancements such as the recent Hope Valley Line upgrade. We are now working with Transport for Greater Manchester on options to introduce a fourth hourly train on this line between Sheffield and Manchester. We are renewing and expanding our tram network. Bus services across South Yorkshire will move to a franchised model from September 2027.

In York and North Yorkshire, we are at an earlier stage of our journey but equally as ambitious as our partners. We need to see **transformational change in our rail services, linking us to Leeds and Sheffield**. We need to see improvements on the York – Scarborough and York – Harrogate links. We are working with partners to improve our station gateway in York linking it to major adjacent developments. We are actively looking at bus reform options to improve our bus services. More is needed, however, to achieve our vision.

The £1.1 billion York Central Development will include **The UK Rail Innovation Hub**. This will build on the region's strong existing operational rail infrastructure innovation eco-system, which includes the University of York and York St John

University, National STEM Centre, Network Rail, AGH Engineering Ltd, and professional institutions of the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

The flagship innovation centre will also serve to enhance the working relationship between our White Rose agreement regional partners and their own innovation eco-systems, which include **the University of Huddersfield's Institute of Railway Research, the University of Sheffield Rail Innovation and Technology Centre, and the Network Rail Training Centre in Doncaster**, completing a sector wide innovation and professional development offering.

Northern is currently progressing a procurement programme to replace more than 200 ageing diesel trains that operate across the north of England with a new fleet, which can be powered by the overhead electric line system, battery or by diesel. These would replace 75 of the ageing diesel trains currently operating across Yorkshire. Subject to the Final Business Case for the replacement of these old trains being endorsed by the DfT and Treasury in 2026, the new trains would enter into service from 2030.

We are experienced deliverers and are taking steps to develop an integrated public transport network, but we **need the Government's help to deliver our ambitions as set out in our credible and affordable plan**. We also require Government's help to deliver rail devolution and provide funding to integrate the railway with our local public transport network. For example, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA) is the only combined authority that is not eligible for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) central Government funding and this limits our ability to invest in transport infrastructure. If YNYCA were to be part of CRSTS, it is estimated we would receive more than £780 million over the period 2027-2032.

A credible and affordable plan



The Transpennine Route Upgrade is the single largest investment the Government has made on a rail upgrade in the North in decades and it is welcomed, but other rail infrastructure improvements over the years have been piecemeal, non-committal and lacked integration.

HS2 East was cancelled without an alternative plan. NPR remains a name without a clear policy and pathway for delivery. There is no certainty on Midland Main Line electrification and Sheffield remains the largest city in UK without electrified railways.

Our country and our regions deserve better. We need a government that shares our ambition and is willing to take a bold step to commit to a long-term plan. **Our plan provides younger generations with hope and a future, deliverable schemes and confidence for investors.**

We understand the financial challenges the Government is facing – dealing with the aftermaths of the Covid-19 pandemic, a challenging economic situation and increasing global instability. Rail investment needs to be balanced with other national priorities.

We are seeking to work with the Government **to enhance our rail network in a sustainable, affordable and credible way with a phased approach** enabling improvements to be delivered over a period of time. Rail investment needs to be affordable to taxpayers and provide certainty and stability to our supply chain and our investors.

Some of the service improvements proposed in our plan do not require significant infrastructure improvements and therefore **could be delivered within the current parliamentary term.** A rolling stock replacement programme could be achieved over a four to six-year period. Rail investment in

our region generates a good economic return. For example, for every £1 invested in Northern's network, at least £4 is generated in wider economic value.

Table 3 on the next page sets out our plan in detail, following discussions with the rail industry to deliver a significant uplift in service provision across our region **in the next five years, with a long-term plan over the next 20 years.**

Our rail proposition

- **The delivery of new trains and sufficient rolling stock** to deliver reliable and more frequent services.
- **Enabling infrastructure improvements** to provide more capacity particularly at our key stations which will provide benefits across the North.
- **Development funding for strategic schemes** that drive new journey opportunities and improve connectivity in the long term.
- **Delivering accessible stations and new stations** to support housing development and key employment sites.
- **Providing new and enhanced rail services** in the short term as quick wins.
- **Rail devolution** to ensure rail is part of an integrated public transport network.

Releasing capacity, speeding up journeys, improving reliability and running more frequent services spreads the benefits across the North and Midlands.

We ask the Government to commit to this plan and go further by accelerating this programme to deliver benefits and economic growth sooner by investing to save.

A credible and affordable phasing plan

	New/improved services	New infrastructure		Development	Outcome
2025	Bradford – Kings Cross	Platform 0 Bradford Forster Square			
2026					
2027	Leeds – Sheffield fast	South Yorkshire tram renewal			
	Sheffield – York XC reinstated	Haxby Station			
	Leeds – Goole	Leeds platform 17 extension			
	Bradford FSQ – Skipton / Ilkley	White Rose station			
	Barnsley – London peak	Elland station			
	Wakefield and five towns	Thorpe Park station			
	Penistone Line	Extension of the South Yorkshire tram network		Business case development for Bradford new station and NPR network	Additional services and new stations to support housing development and economic growth
	Esk Valley	West Yorks Mass Transit spades in the ground		GBR and rail devolution	MCA's greater say in developing the rail network – introduce integrated ticketing with other modes
2028					
2029		Sheffield station capacity		Ongoing scheme development to support local and national aspirations on housing and economic growth, decarbonisation and modal integration	New rolling stock will increase capacity and speed up journeys, improving passenger experience and encourage modal shift
2030	Northern new rolling stock rolled out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer trains • More frequent services 	Platform extensions across the network			
		Station upgrades – Malton, Seamer and Scarborough			
		Rotherham Gateway station			
		Waverley station			
		LBA Parkway			
		Dearne Valley Parkway			
		Leeds existing station capacity			
		Leeds onward travel			
		Penistone line further enhancements			

- Transpennine Route Upgrade 2025-2041
 Programme of station accessibility improvements
- Midland Main Line electrification 2023-2034
 Northern Powerhouse Rail 2032-2050

Table 3 phasing plan for new infrastructure and services based on information from Network Rail and the TOC's, **the text highlighted grey indicate additional White Rose requirement.**

	New/improved services	New infrastructure		Development	Outcome
2030's	Four fast trains Leeds – Sheffield Additional ECML services Services introduced to new Bradford station Enhanced Manchester – Leeds – York services following TRU upgrade New MT services in South and West Yorkshire	Increased capacity at Leeds and Doncaster stations and upgrades at York Leeds – new G line Harrogate line improvements Increased ECML capacity North and South of York New Bradford station and electrification Leeds – Bradford Electrification Leeds – Selby Electrification Leeds – Sheffield+ significant upgrades Extension of the tram network in West and South Yorkshire Capacity to carry more freight		Rolling programme of investment in the rail and tram network to drive growth, increase revenue and reduce costs with savings reinvested in the network	Fast and frequent electrified services connecting Yorkshire cities and main urban centres fully integrated with trams and a modern bus network
2040's	NPR services introduced	Electrification of the Calder valley and Harrogate lines A new line between Bradford – Huddersfield NPR Manchester – Marsden and Manchester – Sheffield, North of York Electrification Selby – Hull, Sheffield – Hull			A rolling programme of electrification to create a decarbonised network across the North of England. The introduction of much faster NPR services between urban centres across the North

Quick wins in Table 3 in relation to restoring or providing new services, which can be delivered at low cost without the need for heavy infrastructure.

These include extending Sheffield – London services to Barnsley, additional fast Leeds – Sheffield service, increasing the frequency of York – Scarborough services, and reinstating services that have had their frequencies cut such as Bradford Foster Square – Ilkley/Skipton and CrossCountry Sheffield – York services via Doncaster.

The text highlighted grey indicate additional White Rose requirement.

Our stations



Our stations are the gateways to the public transport network with potential to unlock development and growth. Stations in most of our cities have significant investment needs and some are shown as examples below.

New Bradford station

Bradford has a history of poor connectivity and weak rail links, being the only major Northern city not on a main line to London or directly connected to fast cross-Pennine routes. This means the city sees very low rail demand when compared to other cities of a similar size. The absence of effective rail connections between Bradford and Manchester Airport is a major constraint to unleashing the economic potential of the city's economy. Rail journey times between Bradford and Leeds also constrains the potential for agglomeration benefits between the cities that have a combined population of 1.3 million people.

To address this the Government, Bradford Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority have committed to development of a new through station in the city and a new link to the TRU corridor at Huddersfield, building on a previous commitment to electrify the line between Leeds and Bradford. This will enable services to operate from Leeds via Bradford and onward to Manchester/Manchester Airport. Early delivery of this package of proposals is a priority for the region, as it will provide Bradford with a 10-minute journey time to Huddersfield, 12 minutes to Leeds and 30 minutes to Manchester. It will be complemented by the West Yorkshire Tram Bradford line.

West Yorkshire has identified the development and delivery of the **new station and the wider rail package as a strategic economic priority in its Local Growth Plan**. The station will be a catalyst

for the Southern Gateway, one of the UK's largest regeneration sites (126 ha) supporting 5,000 new homes, 23,000 jobs, 440,000 square meters employment space and an annual £1.12 billion GVA uplift; and it will provide a transformational impact on economic activity, productivity and employment across the city.

Doncaster

Doncaster Station is a **critical hub on the ECML acting as a major interchange between the main line, CrossCountry route and local services** running across the North of England. Its northern and southern approaches are heavily constrained. These bottlenecks limit the station's ability to handle existing services efficiently, let alone accommodate future growth. Without intervention, these constraints will lead to increased delays, restricted capacity for new services, and a reduction in overall network efficiency.

While the most critical capacity needs on this corridor are long-term, phasing in early interventions could deliver quick wins in terms of performance improvements, modern signalling and basic management of logistics. Addressing this constraint will be vital to ensuring that the ECML can handle growing demand while maintaining a high standard of service for both passengers and freight operators.

Leeds

The station in Leeds has seen consistent passenger growth of 5.1% per year over the past 20 years and is set to see an additional 14.2 million passengers by the 2040s. Commitment for rail infrastructure investment in Leeds, combined with mass transit, is critical to facilitating economic growth. This includes 56,000 new homes to the south of the station under the Leeds Transformational Regeneration Strategic Partnership between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government, Leeds City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The station is significantly constrained from both a passenger and capacity perspective. Leeds is the main bottleneck on the rail network in the North which will inhibit the development of new services going forwards. Inside the station, passenger growth will increasingly lead to an unpleasant and unsafe passenger environment with gatelines, lifts and escalators becoming more overcrowded. In addition, there is currently no direct passenger access to the South-East of the city and the South Bank, which is a significant regeneration area.

Both the **Leeds Existing Station Programme (LESP)** and **Leeds Area Improvement Programme (LAIP)** set out a clear programme of interventions that are required to address these issues and require government funding to deliver.

A pressing concern, however, is the issue of **onward travel at the station**. This includes the interchange with public transport, parking and pick up and drop off. This is already causing serious congestion problems in and around the station which will only worsen as demand increases when TRU and NPR are delivered. Identifying a solution is a priority. A new HS2 station would have provided the solution for onward travel and capacity for future growth but this is no longer an option since it was cancelled.

New Rotherham Gateway station

Rotherham is currently poorly connected to the rail network, with the town centre served via a loop off the main line, and only having two stopping trains an hour. A business case is being developed for a new station on the mainline, which would connect Rotherham to faster regional and national services. The new Rotherham Gateway station will include a main line rail station on the Sheffield–Leeds / Doncaster route, a tram-train stop on the Sheffield Cathedral–Rotherham Parkgate line, and associated station facilities, including a new

commercial development between the rail and tram-train stops. This **major transport investment will support a key advanced manufacturing regeneration opportunity** while being strategically located next to the borough's largest housing development site. It will help unlock the delivery of 33,000 square meters of commercial space and 2,750 new homes, providing a sustainable transport option for future residents.

South Yorkshire has the nation's first tram-train service. Linking Rotherham Parkgate via Rotherham Central and Meadowhall to Sheffield city centre, it has proved that tram-train can work in the UK. In the last year the tram-train line has seen passenger numbers grow by 20%, the highest rate of growth across our network. A new tram-train stop will open in Rotherham at Magna. This will support direct access to the Science Adventure Centre and Business Park and provide a strategic park and ride facility.

Sheffield

Sheffield Midland Station is at the heart of the city's transport network, acting as a crucial link between local, regional, and national rail services. The station's ability to support economic growth, housing expansion and wider city development, however, is severely constrained by existing capacity limitations. Beyond local considerations, **Sheffield's rail infrastructure is essential for national connectivity**, serving as a vital interchange between London, the Midlands, the North of England and beyond.

The network is approaching saturation, with track utilisation already at 81%, close to the upper limit allowed by Network Rail. Without intervention, it will be impossible to timetable additional services, severely limiting future expansion.

Current rail constraints hinder the station's ability to accommodate increased train frequencies, limiting connectivity to major economic centres like Manchester, Leeds, and London.



Network Rail has undertaken detailed studies on these areas and has developed a series of proposals to increase capacity. A shorter term 'no regrets' package of work has been prepared for Sheffield Midland to lengthen several platforms and make the station work more efficiently by changing signalling.

The Sheffield Station Campus development will see major redevelopment of the surrounding area around to deliver 800 new homes and 20,000 square meters of commercial floorspace, with new offices and leisure opportunities. Onward connectivity to and from the station is an existing challenge with the need for improved integration with public transport and active travel, and addressing congestion within the station taxi rank and immediate local roads including the inner ring road.

York

By 2050, passenger numbers through York station will increase dramatically. TRU is predicting a doubling of use, and early work for HS2 East was suggesting usage of between 30 and 40 million people using the station, emphasising the station's pivotal role for access to the city, for interchange and the York Central development zone.

With the numbers expected to use the station, it is key that alongside the major infrastructure programmes, work is undertaken to **redevelop York station to ensure it can cope with operational rail and passenger demand.**

Customers will then be offered an experience befitting a key interchange on the national rail network, serving a substantial catchment in North Yorkshire and the wider North of England.

Working with partners and industry representatives, a high-level vision for York station will be developed. This can be delivered in phases and in line with relevant programmes and other external factors.

Station accessibility

Equal access to the rail network is a right, not a luxury. The accessibility of rail stations varies considerably across the White Rose region. Of our 146 stations, **72% do not have compliant step-free access** and many lack basic facilities, such as toilets, drop-off/pick up points, induction loops and other elements, including accessible signage.

All of these exclude people from travelling by train to access jobs, education, leisure and health services. Improving accessibility and inclusivity provides benefits for all travellers and requires an uplift in funding.

New stations and links

New rail stations improve access to the rail network and support growth and development. Several new rail station sites are identified in the White Rose region as critical to unlock development, housing and growth. These include White Rose, Elland, Rotherham Main Line, Haxby, Thorpe Park, Waverley, Dearne Valley Parkway and Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway stations.

For example, **Haxby station** to the north-east of York has a strong and well-established business case and could be delivered within the first five years of our phased programme. The station will provide better opportunities for existing residents, enable housing growth in the nearby area, provide Park & Ride opportunities into York that will alleviate local traffic and further supports the viability of half-hourly trains between York and Scarborough, contributing to economic growth along the whole corridor.

Further work is being undertaken to investigate the feasibility of a tram-train service on the Don Valley Line between Sheffield and Stocksbridge. This will improve public transport links to employment and serve new housing in the area.

Integral parts of integration

The three White Rose mayors have welcomed the Government's intention to put MCAs at the heart of the future Great British Railways. We see this as a major opportunity to ensure our stations and rail services as **integral parts of integrated local transport systems. This will be supported by commitments to seamless ticketing across bus, rail and mass-transit / tram systems**, and bolstered by franchised bus services and networks that establish stations as hubs in our bus networks.

Stations are gateways to our public transport system and our places.

It is crucial our stations are accessible and specific new stations are delivered to unlock growth and regeneration in our region.



Freight

The previous government set a target for at least a 75% growth in rail freight by 2050. There is a vibrant freight market across the wider Yorkshire and Humberside region for which data is available. The region generates 11% of the UK's total road freight traffic (157 million tonnes) and has 15% of the total warehousing floorspace in England.

We have disproportionately high shares of road freight traffic due to the presence of the Humber ports and extensive motorway network (M1, M62, M18, M180 and A1M) across the region.

Drax Power Station and aggregate quarry traffic out of the Yorkshire Dales are considerable contributors to our rail freight. Drax has an average of 17 biomass trains per day to supply the pellets needed to generate 11% of the UK's renewable electricity. Access to the power station from the Port of Liverpool, where the pellets are

imported, requires a circuitous and lengthy route due to the lack of train paths across the Pennines.

91% of the UK population is within four hours of the iPort rail terminal near Doncaster, which receives 500 containers on average a day from Southampton, Felixstowe, Teesport and Immingham. The inland port has plenty of capacity to expand and provides a sustainable alternative to the congested motorway network.

There are significant constraints to expanding the role of rail freight. This includes the capacity and capability of the rail network to handle more trains and connect to the places freight needs to move. Key sections of line also need improvements to loading gauge clearance to allow services to operate. We will work with partners to develop the evidence for interventions to unlock freight opportunities across the rail network.

Conclusions and next steps



This report identifies the potential to add **£20 billion** to regional GVA over a ten-year period with the potential to support the generation of **83,000 jobs** and **210,000 new homes** through appropriately targeted rail investment. It sets out the economic and social challenges our region is facing, how our rail network and our rail offer are holding us back, and the great opportunities we could unlock through rail connectivity. Economic prosperity, housing and more jobs would bring in more revenue to the Government and reduce the burden on the public purse.

We also set out our rail proposition, jointly developed with rail industry partners. We have an affordable and credible phasing plan the Government can deliver in the next five years, with a long-term plan over the next 20 years.

We look forward to working with Government, our rail industry and regional partners to deliver growth and prosperity to our region and our country.

We have a rail network that is constrained

Aged and life expired rolling stock

Poor network reliability and performance

Lack of capacity at key stations

Track constraints that make our trains slow

Inadequate service frequencies on many lines

We have economic ambitions that require a new transport system to support it

A GVA gap of **£25 billion** that is holding back our economic well-being

A rich infrastructure for people to build their lives around **11 universities** and **three national parks**

83,000 new jobs can be unleashed if the constraints are lifted

Connected to the construction of at least **21,000 homes** each year

Our vision for a fit for purpose rail network will release constraints and deliver economic prosperity

In time, major investment (akin to TRU) to unlock the full potential of our railways

More frequent services that allow people to build their lives around public transport, not the car

Faster links between our cities, towns and rural communities

Expanded stations that can handle greater train frequencies and passenger growth

New stations that enable new growth opportunities and public transport access

Appendix 1

Examples of key economic assets in the White Rose region

Leeds Innovation Arc	Innovation neighbourhoods, across 132 hectares of the city centre. More than 3,000 new homes in and around the Arc and the potential for up to 220,000m ² of public realm improvements as well as space for two new city parks.
South Yorkshire Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District	Developing world's first between Rotherham and Sheffield and spatial core of South Yorkshire's Investment Zone, strengthening new industrial economy and sovereign UK capability. Potential £1.2 billion private sector investment and 8,000 jobs, housing in Rotherham town centre, jobs/houses together in South Yorkshire. New Waverley Rail Station critical to serve businesses, communities and the new 4,000 home Waverley Community.
Rail innovation in York and North Yorkshire	York and North Yorkshire has been a driving force in UK rail innovation for more than 160 years. The region is a UK hub for rail excellence – Network Rail, Siemens, Ricardo Rail, Arup, Mott MacDonald, Amey Consulting... to name a few. There are opportunities to maximise this expertise and unlock the potential of local specialisms linked to AI and cyber security.
Brighouse garden communities and Clifton Business Park	New garden communities of around 3,000 homes at Brighouse and 52,000 square metres of commercial floorspace at Clifton employment park, supporting 900 jobs on the border of Calderdale and Kirklees, will transform the economic contribution of this strategic corridor by providing the link between the major economic engines of Leeds and Manchester.
Don Valley Hydrogen cluster	Opportunities to develop through investment in the UK's largest hydrogen electrolyser (ITM Power) and developing its surrounding ecosystem by opening 'HyRIC', a leading Hydrogen Research and Innovation Centre, and making progress with industrial decarbonisation and UK IP development.
Maltkiln, a new village in North Yorkshire	Development of a new village, Maltkiln, is underway, connected to Harrogate by the A59 and served by Cattal rail station. The development proposes 4000 homes with local amenities, open space and landscaping.

Dewsbury Riverside

Significant planned housing growth, around 4,000 homes south of Dewsbury. Creation of new local amenities and highway infrastructure, maximising the benefits of TRU, new Ravensthorpe station and improvements to the Penistone line.

Bradford City Centre and Southern Gateway

Bradford city centre prime focus for regeneration, employment, retail, leisure and city-centre living, 7,000 new homes, including Bradford City Village, key commercial sites for high-quality business use and major transport infrastructure.

Southern Gateway is further extension of city centre and a key future location for growth. Supported by a new NPR station and Mass Transit hub, this area is a major opportunity for transformational change including 2,500 new homes, office and industrial development and sustainable urban living.

Barnsley Town Centre

Redevelopment includes the first town centre NHS Community Diagnostic Centre in the country – delivering nearly three million scans a year. A further £40 million could repurpose Alhambra Shopping Centre as a Health and Wellbeing Hub, co-locating services from Barnsley hospital outpatients, NHS mental health providers, physical wellbeing and council social and housing care. This will make care more accessible and increase footfall by at least 100,000 visitors a year.

Wakefield Strategic Regeneration Partnership

Established to drive regeneration and leverage private sector investment. Supports diversification of employment to attract high skilled jobs, increase job density and improve resilience. Early stages include a new hotel, extended and enhanced city square, several new housing developments and a new museum and library.

Engineering biology and life sciences in York and North Yorkshire

York and North Yorkshire looking to maximise science, knowledge, innovation and research strengths to drive growth in an engineering biology and life sciences northern cluster. The area is already home to major health tech companies Tunstall and Labcorp and University of York hosts a world-class scale up facilities at the Biorenewables Development Centre.

