

North Yorkshire County Council

Business and Environmental Services

Executive Members

17 August 2018

**Department for Transport – Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise
Public Consultation – Connecting Britain’s Cities**

Report of the Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To outline the key elements of the Department for Transport (DfT) – Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise Public Consultation and to seek Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services (BES) in consultation with BES Executive Members’ approval for a County Council response to the consultation

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise covers rail services that connect North Yorkshire at Doncaster, York, Leeds and Darlington (North Yorkshire currently has no direct Cross Country services) with Sheffield, Derby, Birmingham, the South West, Wales, the Thames Valley, as well as the North East and Scotland. The franchise is due for renewal in 2019 and the Department for Transport (DfT) are currently consulting on the requirements for the next franchise to transform the travelling experience on Cross Country. A copy of the consultation document is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cross-country-rail-franchise>
- 2.2 The consultation has four themes:-
- Crowding and Capacity
 - Markets served and competition
 - Passenger Experience
 - Fares and Ticketing
- 2.3 The themes then lead to 28 questions (not all relevant to North Yorkshire).
- 2.4 The deadline for responses is 30 August 2018.
- 2.5 For North Yorkshire the key element of the franchise and the consultation is around both infrastructure and passenger train capacity and for this report I have detailed the potential issues below.
- 2.6 The capacity questions can be split into three elements relevant to North Yorkshire:-
- There is a suggestion that there is not enough track capacity between York and Newcastle and that the number of Cross Country trains would reduce from 2 (one via Sheffield and Doncaster (the faster route for North Yorkshire travelers) and one via Leeds (generally slower) to just one likely to go via Leeds. For North Yorkshire this is likely to lead to:

- Reduction in connectivity to the Cross Country network at York and Darlington and longer journey times to Sheffield, Derby and Birmingham, if the only train is via Leeds and also dependent on where the train stops.
- The opportunity to stop any Cross Country trains at Northallerton (a long term ask) never being achieved.
- In the DfT public consultation event it was quoted that 30% of all Cross Country journeys made were from the East Coast, suggesting that a reduction to one train may create its own capacity issues.
- Looking to the future reducing the Cross Country service seems not to recognise the importance of these services before the start of the HS2 services in developing future demand (Member support for HS2 has partly been on the basis of improving links to the West Midlands – especially journey times).

2.7 This question has further highlighted the need for investment in capacity on the East Coast Main Line between York and Newcastle.

- DfT are suggesting that if the second train were removed then it could operate to other destinations.
 - In the response (Appendix 1) we should seek to maintain two services to York and beyond but suggest that bidders do look at additional opportunities to serve new areas of North Yorkshire, whether Northallerton or for example Selby.
- The current Cross Country trains are regularly overcrowded and new trains with additional capacity should be part of the new franchise. The reduction from two trains to one for York – Newcastle is likely to exacerbate the crowding for North Yorkshire residents.

3.0 The North Yorkshire County Council response

3.1 Will be based on the above and our previous asks of the Cross Country franchise:-

- Review whether a few trains each day could call at Northallerton, the station is a rail gateway for North Yorkshire and car park capacity has been increased to reflect this. With an ageing population (recently referred to in the DfT Inclusive Transport Strategy) the importance of direct services for our residents becomes more important and Northallerton rail patronage is growing rapidly.
- With no direct cross country trains in North Yorkshire, good connections at York (Northallerton, Thirsk, Scarborough and Harrogate lines), Leeds (for Harrogate line, Skipton, Settle & Carlisle and Bentham Line), Doncaster (Selby) and Darlington (Yorkshire Dales, Northallerton and Thirsk) are very important. The York “connection” from some stations on the Harrogate line and the Scarborough line leads to a current wait time of over 50 minutes for the onward Cross Country connection southbound and a similar situation or a “very tight” connection Northbound.
- There are significant fares anomalies / split ticketing issues between stations where Cross Country trains stop and those that do not, Cross Country fares can be considerably cheaper from York – Birmingham as an example compared to Northallerton – Birmingham especially on early morning trains.
- North Yorkshire County Council would welcome more regular dialogue with Cross Country in the future.
- Community Rail Partnerships (4 in North Yorkshire) and we would welcome a sufficient level of support from the Cross Country franchise (they have been doing some work in the current franchise with the Leeds – Lancaster - Morecambe Community Rail Partnership).

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The consultation is part of the DfT process for the future Cross Country Passenger franchise, though North Yorkshire has no direct cross country services our response can shape the future thinking of the franchise and how the franchise can best serve North Yorkshire.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any financial implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any financial implications.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any legal implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any legal implications.

7.0 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any equalities implications arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation will not have any equalities implications, therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required and a copy of the EIA screening form is attached as Appendix 2.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Corporate Director (BES) in consultation with BES Executive Members are asked to approve the draft response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1 subject to final detailed amendments agreed by the Corporate Director BES.

BARRIE MASON
Assistant Director - Highways and Transportation

Author or report: Graham North

Background documents: None

Cross Country Consultation Team
Floor 4 / 16,
Department for Transport,
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Road,
London,
SW1P 4DR

**Highways and Transportation
Business and Environmental Services**
County Hall, Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AH

Tel: 01609 535663

Your ref:

Contact: crosscountry@dft.gov.uk

www.northyorks.gov.uk

Date 17 August 2018

Dear Sir / Madam

**Department for Transport – Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise
Public Consultation – Connecting Britain’s Cities**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise Public Consultation – Connecting Britain’s Cities.

North Yorkshire does not currently have any direct Cross Country direct services and relies on connections for its Cross Country services at York, Leeds, Darlington and Doncaster it is seen as an important element of North Yorkshires wider UK connectivity and especially the links to the West Midlands. The importance of connectivity with the rail network and Cross Country is reflected in both our Strategic Transport Prospectus <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/strategic-transport-prospectus> and Local Transport Plan 4 <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/local-transport-plan>

The proposal within the consultation regarding the reduction of Cross Country services between York – Newcastle and Scotland from the current two (one via Doncaster – and one via Leeds which is the longer route) would reduce North Yorkshires connectivity to Sheffield, Derby, the West Midlands (by half and with the longer journey times via Leeds), the South West, Wales and the Thames Valley and is seen as a retrograde step.

The reduction is also at a time when the services should be enhanced to take full advantage of the arrival of HS2 in the early 2030’s. NYCC have supported HS2 partly on the basis of it providing a faster journey to the West Midlands, journey times could and should be improved as part any future franchise which should also improve the passenger experience to the West Midlands, NYCC would hope that this is borne in mind in any decision taken.

The service reduction also highlights the issues of lack of infrastructure capacity between York and Newcastle and work needs to be carried out to address the capacity issues around the approaches to York and between York and Newcastle (both Thirsk and Northallerton have been highlighted as pinch points by Network Rail). Investment in to retain and enable new services needs to be the priority for this section of the East Coast Main Line (ECML), rather than options to reduce services coming forward.

North Yorkshire would like to see Northallerton served by some direct Cross Country trains in the future, the number of people using the station has grown by 44% in the last ten years, with the potential reduction to one Cross Country train on the ECML this would be very difficult to maintain.

North Yorkshire would welcome any new destinations that could be served by the Cross Country proposal and look forward to proposals coming forward however, this must not be at the expense of existing Cross Country services.

The Secretary of State in his foreword for the Cross Country consultation states that “resolving crowding is my primary objective”, in the DfT public consultation event it was also stated that 30% of passengers on Cross Country come from the East Coast, more work needs to be carried out on the proposed reduction in services on the ECML as the decision could lead to crowding issues, reductions in availability of fares (particularly advance purchase) and other on train facilities such as cycle spaces and disabled spaces on board.

For North Yorkshire the connection and passenger experience at York, Leeds, Darlington and Doncaster is paramount and with investment schemes developing for many stations between York and Newcastle, Cross Country needs to ensure its passengers have the best possible experience. The development of more frequent services on many lines in North Yorkshire will improve connections into Cross Country trains at these stations and it is important that connections into/out of Cross Country trains are optimised, especially if there were to be only one Cross Country service.

Cross Country need to develop earlier and later trains on a weekday currently the first train from York does not arrive in Birmingham until 0910 and from Birmingham to York it is 0829, on Sundays you cannot arrive in Birmingham before 1206 and into York before 1129 ruling out the possibility of day trips. Similarly trains finish quite early in the evenings.

It is for the operator of the Cross Country franchise to determine the best timetable options for the markets it serves.

There are significant fares anomalies / split ticketing issues for North Yorkshire as a result of no direct trains, this means it is very difficult to get access to Cross Country cheaper advance purchase tickets other than from a Cross Country served station. Cross Country fares can be considerably cheaper from York – Birmingham as an example compared to Northallerton – Birmingham especially on early morning peak trains. Split ticketing is common place from Northallerton as an example.

Stakeholder engagement has improved recently and this should continue with any new Cross Country franchise holder.

North Yorkshire County Council supports its Community Rail Partnerships (4 in total) and the current support by Cross Country of the Leeds Lancaster Morecambe CRP Dementia Friendly Rail project is welcome. Consideration of support for those whilst not touching the Cross Country network such as the Esk Valley or Yorkshire Coast would also be welcome as some passengers using these lines will be using Cross Country.

Yours faithfully.

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Initial equality impact assessment screening form (As of October 2015 this form replaces 'Record of decision not to carry out an EIA')			
This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	Business and Environmental Services		
Service area	Highways and Transportation		
Proposal being screened	Department for Transport – Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise – Connecting Britain's Cities - Consultation		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Graham North		
What are you proposing to do?	To agree a response to the Department for Transport – Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise – Connecting Britain's Cities – Consultation		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	To input NYCC views into the future Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	No resource commitment or impact on budget		
Is there likely to be an adverse impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYCC's additional agreed characteristics? As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be a significant adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your Equality rep for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Yes	No	Don't know/No info available
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Sex (Gender)		✓	
Race		✓	
Sexual orientation		✓	
Gender reassignment		✓	
Religion or belief		✓	
Pregnancy or maternity		✓	
Marriage or civil partnership		✓	
NYCC additional characteristic			
People in rural areas		✓	
People on a low income		✓	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		✓	

Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (e.g. disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No		
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	None		
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full EIA:
Reason for decision	<p>Through this national consultation the Department for Transport are looking for comments / input from North Yorkshire County Council to the Cross Country Passenger Rail franchise.</p> <p>As such the recommendations to agree our response will have no direct impact to services and infrastructure and therefore will have no negative impact on any of the protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>The NYCC response has highlighted the areas where improvements could be made by the Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise to benefit residents of North Yorkshire.</p>		
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	<i>Allan McVeigh</i>		
Date	<i>8 August 2018</i>		