



**North Yorkshire County Council
Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency Committee – 8 November 2018**

Harrogate to York Railway Enhancement Update

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the committee on the progress of the project for the Harrogate to York railway service enhancements.

2.0 Harrogate – York Update

- 2.1 The Harrogate – York Railway is a key transport priority for the County Council and work over recent years has been carried out to build the case for investment and improvement. The core objective for the line is to see a doubling of the service frequency, giving 4 trains per hour Harrogate to Leeds and 2 trains per hour Harrogate to York; a reduction of journey time, achieving 15 minutes reduction over the whole line and an improvement in reliability of the train services.
- 2.2 In June 2018 the Harrogate - York rail enhancement project reached a significant milestone when the YNYER LEP considered a full business case application and approved a grant of up to £9.6m towards the costs of infrastructure improvements necessary to enable 2 trains per hour in each direction between Harrogate and York. This funding together with up to £2.9m agreed in principle from NYCC resources will help to ensure train service improvements are introduced in the current franchise period.
- 2.3 With the LEP Funding now approved the Council has recently strengthened the project team overseeing progress with additional project management resource and new governance arrangements. This will ensure the project remains on track and focused on the delivery of the objectives.
- 2.4 The next phase of work, the single option selection and further design (GRIP 3,4) stage will see the design of updated signalling between Knaresborough and Poppleton, replacing the Victorian token block signalling with track signalling, increasing line speed to and from the single track line section and updating track configuration at Cattal.
- 2.5 These infrastructure enhancements will increase the track capacity and provide the flexibility to enable 2 trains per hour to operate in each direction throughout the day.

2.6 Officers are working with partners in Network Rail and Northern Railways (train operator) to progress the project with a view to completing the design, construction, and service implementation by late 2020, with enhanced services operating from the December 2020 or May 2021 timetable change date.

3.0 Rail Franchise changes

3.1 The Northern and TransPennine Express rail franchises were awarded as 'transformational', and despite poor performance and reliability following the timetable change in May 2018, improvements in the Leeds – Harrogate – York service are now being seen.

3.2 Newer more modern rolling stock is now being introduced on the line, replacing the old 'pacer' trains with refurbished modern class 170 units. These are more comfortable, faster and quieter, with better passenger facilities. Feedback from passengers is that they are a welcome improvement.

3.3 Planned for early in the franchise period, the doubling of frequency on the Harrogate – Leeds section from 2 trains per hour to 4 trains per hour is now expected to be introduced next year in 2019 (Northern have bid for 4 trains per hour for the May 2019 timetable). With a day time frequency of a train every 15 minutes, the service to and from Leeds will effectively be a turn up and go service, and will make travel to or from Leeds much easier.

3.4 Included in the East Coast Mainline franchise, is a commitment for the introduction of 6 additional (making a total of 7) trains per day in each direction between London and Harrogate. Despite the change of operator to LNER, it is still intended that the additional services will operate and it is anticipated that they will be introduced in 2019.

4.0 Patronage Growth

4.1 The Harrogate Line continues to show strong patronage growth with the latest Office of Road and Rail (ORR) figures reporting station 'on/off's' increasing by 6% on the previous year, giving a 22% growth over the last 5 years and 46% growth in the last 10 years.

4.2 The Harrogate Line has four of the ten busiest stations in North Yorkshire, these also having the highest growth rate last year among the top 10. The latest ORR release of station usage data shows Harrogate and Hornbeam Park growing by 6%, Starbeck by 8% and Knaresborough 10%.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 To note the content of the report.

Author:
JOHN LAKING
TRANSPORT PLANNING
Business and Environmental Services
North Yorkshire County Council