

North Yorkshire County Council**Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee****15 April 2015****Rail Services: the campaign for the reinstatement of the
Leeds-Wetherby-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line****1 Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To provide a covering report to the presentation given to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the campaign to reinstate the Leeds-Wetherby-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line.

2 Background

- 2.1 Dr Adrian Morgan has been campaigning for over 25 years to reopen the Leeds-Wetherby-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton line, which was closed in the 1960s. Dr. Morgan is the Chairman of the Leeds Northern Railway Reinstatement Group.
- 2.2 Dr. Morgan has submitted a written statement, in advance of his presentation to the Committee meeting on 15 April, which is attached in Appendix A.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and discusses the findings in the written statement and presentation provided by the Chairman of the Leeds Northern Railway Reinstatement Group.

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Background Documents – none.

Annexes: Appendix A: April 2015 Statement to NYCC about reinstating a rail link to Ripon.

APRIL 2015 STATEMENT TO NYCC ABOUT REINSTATING A RAIL LINK TO RIPON

Since the birth of railways in 1807, there has been progressive, continuous improvement in speed, frequency and comfort for those communities lucky enough to be rail connected. Realisation that CO2 levels from burning fossil fuels, particularly in road transport, is leading to irreversible warming of the planet, a lengthy programme of total railway electrification has begun.

Those communities escaping the 1964 Beeching closures continue to have investment in rail improvements creating inequality with those communities that lost their railway service reflected in growth, employment and development prosperity fifty years on. Harrogate was fortunate in retaining a railway link despite loss of two routes and all through services instead of complete closure, in 1967 as happened to Ripon and Wetherby but, compared to other towns of similar size or less in Leeds City Region, Harrogate station is very much under performing in annual footfall figures. See table 1. This is thought to be due to loss of through route to the North and South and through trains. Until closure of the Wetherby line in 1964 and Ripon line in 1967, Harrogate was a hub station connected to Ripon, Wetherby, Tadcaster and all "West Yorkshire Five" towns by regular daily through trains but now only to Wakefield, beyond Leeds, by the one daily Kings Cross train each way.

The Leeds Northern Railway Reinstatement Group, endorsed by transport consultants, believes that reinstatement of the railway line between Leeds and Northallerton via Wetherby/Tadcaster, Harrogate and Ripon will not only improve the local economy of Ripon, Tadcaster and Wetherby but will increase the prosperity of Harrogate by restoring through trains to other parts of the North of England and Scotland.

Only Ripon-Harrogate was looked at in the 2006 Report as the greatest daily flow from Ripon was south along the A61 to Harrogate, 48%, Leeds, 11%, Bradford, 6% and other 3%. Northbound flow was 27% and to less defined destinations, but not taking account of the needs of Harrogate residents and visitors to travel north without having to travel via York and an inconvenient change of train there with greatly extended journey times. The marked difference in journey quality between Harrogate line local trains and Inter City trains is a deterrent to visitors using rail. More through trains of better quality would attract more visitors to Harrogate increasing footfall and revenue.

It was shown in a 2004 Demand Forecast that fare box revenue would cover operating costs between Ripon and Harrogate but not enough flow onwards to Leeds to cover costs of two Ripon-Leeds trains per hour and not sufficient profit from the fare box to repay construction costs and interest on the capital within sixty years, the yardstick for infrastructure investment.

Where is the evidence that Benefit to Cost Ratio will be any better in 2015 than that calculated in 2005?

In 2005 BCR was calculated as 1.3 at best, just below Government threshold of 1.5 for infrastructure schemes of this type. The only way of improving the ratio is to reduce construction and operating costs or increase revenue from the fare box or both. Professionals believe BCR could now be as much as 4.3 for the following reasons.

1. By reinstating the whole route between Harrogate and Northallerton, operating flexibility is introduced by connecting two parts of the National rail system at Leeds and Northallerton as recommended by the Association of Train Operating Companies, ATOC, in its 2009 Report

“Connecting Communities”. A through route scores higher than reinstating a stub especially this through route as it creates an emergency diversion route for York-Northallerton, the only section of the East Coast mainline between Kings Cross and Dundee without one.

2. The technicalities of calculating BCR have altered since 2005 to our benefit. Just recalculating data from 2005 in the revised way will lift BCR to above 1.5.
3. The Department for Transport has instructed that the winner of the Northern Rail franchise bid must introduce four trains an hour between Harrogate and Leeds from December 2017. This reduces operating costs of the two trains an hour proposed to Ripon by 66% compared to 2005 as the cost of operating the Leeds-Harrogate leg of the service is now borne by Northern Rail. This will increase BCR above 1.5
4. The Electrification Task Force has just published its final report. Electrification of the Harrogate Loop has been given priority and with a business case part funded by NYCC already completed in 2013 with a BCR of 3.61, installation should be completed between 2019 and 2024. If Harrogate is electrified, then the Ripon line will be electrified also. Electric trains are 30% cheaper to operate than diesel trains therefore operating costs of the Ripon line will be further reduced compared to 2005 lifting BCR even higher.
5. Average footfall at Harrogate Line stations has grown by 54% since 2004, only 32% at Harrogate station. There is every reason to suppose that Ripon would be 50% had a station reopened in 2004. Additionally, fare revenue has increased by 27% in the last ten years, 22% higher than inflation index. This has increased revenue which in turn raises BCR. Demand Forecast for Ripon station in 2004 was 0.73m annually. Actual footfall for Skipton station in 2004 was 0.72m. Actual footfall for Skipton in 2013 was 1.1m. Ripon station could be similar considering 1.023 million annual visitors to the five Ripon attractions in 2013 although visitors are not reflected in Ripon fare box but could be in Northern Rail receipts elsewhere.
6. The population of Ripon has risen from 8,600 in 1961 to 17,000 in 2011. Despite manufacturing employment in Ripon remaining static since line closure in 1967 and service industry employment increasing since, population and employment has stubbornly remained unbalanced. This will remain in the foreseeable future due to the loss of 650 army jobs by 2017. With planned housing developments in the District Core this imbalance will become acute requiring daily out-of-Ripon commuting to employment centres elsewhere.
7. If the GRIP stages are far enough advanced, construction costs can be reduced by planning and delivery of the former Dragon Junction, Harrogate, when resignalling and upgrade work is carried out between Harrogate and York in 2018/19 as was done at Horsforth in 2012.

Reduction of 7.3 million vehicle kilometres annually on the A61, where there have been 24 fatalities and 118 serious injuries since 2000 between Ripon and Harrogate alone, removing tonnes of CO2 emissions and potentially carcinogenic diesel exhaust particulates. This is more than twice the saving of 3.0 million vehicle kilometres in the WSP, 2013 Harrogate Loop Electrification study.

An online poll of Ripon residents in 2013 showed 96.7% of respondents (483) wanted a railway station. 72% of Ripon Sixth Form students, in a Civic Society poll in the same year, suggested a railway station as the best way of improving life for them in Ripon.

New economy jobs in regional centres are replacing heavy industry manufacturing jobs in the North of England. This requires a large residential hinterland to give an adequate pool of suitably qualified employees from a greater commuting area. Current transport networks are now considered inadequate by constraining the transformation of the Northern economy. Fast, frequent rail links are now considered as necessary for commuter journeys in the North. Better connectivity and increased capacity between communities is a key to unlocking potential and generating wealth by allowing greater interaction between people and offering a choice of residential, employment and leisure opportunities especially social inclusion opportunities for those with disabilities.

The rail network is seen as a critical component in delivering this vision because it has the potential to knit together communities across the North to provide growth and capacity of main centres which are key economic drivers. Reinstating Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton will unlock additional rail capacity as well as reintroducing an essential vehicle for economic growth in Ripon and Harrogate.

Local authorities across the North of England, including NYCC, believe that the local rail network has not seen an appropriate level of investment over the last twenty years and now needs significant enhancement in capacity if it is to underpin the regeneration of the region.

Dr Adrian Morgan.

Table 1. Random Settlements within Leeds City Region Relative to Harrogate Population and Footfall

	Population	Annual Journeys 2013/14 (millions) ORR Data	Annual Journeys relative to Harrogate population (millions)
Harrogate	77,000	1.40	1.40
Ilkley	12,000	1.25	8.02
Skipton	16,000	1.10	5.29
Shipley	28,000	1.70	4.68
Bingley	20,000	1.18	4.50
Guiseley	24,000	1.20	3.85
Horsforth	23,000	1.10	3.68
Wakefield	76,000	2.80	2.83
Garforth	23,000	0.64	2.14
Halifax	82,000	1.90	1.78
Keighley	89,000	1.64	1.42
Northallerton	16,000	0.68	3.27

- Current mainlines
- Proposed reinstatements

