

# Bradford stations – Levelling-up the economy

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“Investment in what Boris Johnson called ‘levelling up’ the UK economy is long overdue, but a new and welcome focus on recovery in the North is emerging from Government, based on infrastructure investment and ‘build back better’ – among the Chancellor’s announcements last month was confirmation of the £4.2 billion in transport ‘settlements’ from 2022 for eight city regions.

This reinforces the government’s priorities of tackling congestion, addressing climate change and driving productivity. Nevertheless, this new money, spread thinly over whole regions of the UK, can only be seen as a catalyst – it is going to need more to deliver these outcomes than a little cash and a lot of goodwill.

Critical to making these ‘settlements’ effective will be local decisions to apply money to the right things in the right environments. This means funding projects where the foundations for growth are already established and where investment has the potential of pan-regional impact – where better than Bradford and in particular Bradford’s railway stations?

Bradford has for many years endured without the levels of connectivity that a modern dynamic city

deserves. Without doubt, Bradford growth has been stifled by not being on a primary rail route while its two existing stations fail to capture the imagination, drive and spirit of the city. This is more than just a cosmetic problem – great stations drive inward investment, attract businesses and visitors and become destinations in their own right.

Well-connected towns and cities provide access to better jobs and homes and provide business with access to greater skills, while great stations drive regeneration and prosperity – addressing Bradford's missing connectivity and anonymous stations is a logical target for 'levelling up' funds.

Bradford has already invested in place-making, creating great educational establishments and cultural centres. With an established foundation in entrepreneurial start-ups, digital and technology the city is like a tightly coiled spring ready to leap to the next stage of its evolution.

The city is driving local recovery founded on what really matters – quality of place and quality of life. And with its clear focus on Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), the Council also understands the critical importance of mobility.



The proposed new NPR station, whilst not without its challenges, will unlock huge opportunities for Bradford, the wider City Region and our national recovery. Calculating its value merely in terms of making



journeys faster and more direct seems to miss the regeneration point.

Cities around the world are finding that successful station-led regeneration repairs connectivity, creates a hub for single travel network and offers new venues for commerce, arts, culture and entertainment – a station for everyone, not just passengers.

Of the 176 million people who pass through Kings Cross St Pancras, 12 million go specifically to shop. The two conjoined stations are driving the area's prosperity and annual visitor numbers are increasing by 40% each year.

The private sector invested to establish and expand the concept of Kings Cross as a place beyond just two stations and the public-sector has invested and continues to invest in improving facilities, transport reliability and services.

Here the original catalyst investment has attracted and continues to attract further investment. The public and private sector worked together to deliver outcomes that individually they would not have been able to deliver.

To 'level-up' our economy we need to understand how this type of success happens and rebuild regeneration propositions relevant to each location.

For Bradford, it's not just about a great new station as part of a rail system, it's about creating a new venue for the city. A multi-functional destination that works as an integrated campus drawing in people, life, travel modes and a much broader range of facilities and services than our traditional stations provide.

To create this new Bradford campus, land local to the station and with the potential for regeneration will be needed. It will also need to draw upon Bradford's ample supply of fledgling businesses with their spirit to grow.

Within this regeneration cocktail, urban living, traditionally reserved for an 'elite' of young professionals, needs to be an option for families to bring life and vitality and to expand the daytime economy into evenings and weekends. With this combined firepower of development, ambition, space, business drive, people, culture, vitality, diversity and life, the mechanics of regeneration can begin to work for Bradford both as a gateway to the North and a place to be in its own right.

If done right, the effectiveness of the new NPR station will be felt well beyond the City Region's boundary and could positively impact the country's recovery. So, if you're looking for levelling-up impact, where better than Bradford?"

– [Arcadis](#) recently announced it had joined forces with [Linxon](#) and [SSE Contracting](#), to power up a greener and more effective railway, delivering the HV solution as one.

*Photo credit: Getty Images*