

Government joins forces with Liverpool to transform city's rail network

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An agreement has been signed by Transport Secretary Mark Harper and Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham which aims to develop a simpler, more affordable and integrated transport network in Liverpool.

The Memorandum of Understanding commits to the Government working in closer collaboration with the city to deliver plans for a fully integrated public transport system in Merseyside. Signatories included the Transport Secretary, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Network Rail and the Great British Railways Transition Team.

The government says the agreement could pave the way for easier, cheaper and more accessible journeys across the city, providing better connectivity to jobs, education and business opportunities in Liverpool.

This comes alongside £12 billion announced by the government as part of its Network North plan to better connect Manchester and Liverpool. The funding will allow the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail as previously planned, including high-speed lines.

The agreement will be signed at the official opening of Headbolt Lane – the country's newest train station in Kirkby, funded by £80 million of Government funding.

Transport Secretary Mark Harper said: “Today’s agreement demonstrates this Government’s commitment to transforming public transport across the country and empowering elected leaders to make decisions based on the priorities of local people.

“This agreement follows over a billion pounds of funding committed to the city through our Network North plans and will kickstart transport improvements for people across the city, making journeys affordable and accessible for all.”

Headbolt Lane station is the new terminus for Merseyrail and Northern services. Passengers are already benefiting from the station, which offers improved connections to the centre of Liverpool, Wigan and Manchester, as well as better connectivity to the region’s bus services.

It will be served by new state-of-the-art trains equipped with innovative battery technology, which are currently being developed and rolled out across the entire Merseyrail fleet, as part of plans to double capacity on the network and deliver greener, more reliable services.

Thanks to government funding, it will soon become the first battery powered fleet in the UK, opening up the possibility for further expansion of the Merseyrail network.

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Steve Rotheram said: “This deal signifies not only a massive moment for our region – but the start of a new wave of devolution for the country. It puts us on track to open up the right conversations around how we can improve our rail network for the better and run it in the best interests of passengers.

“It’s the Liverpool City Region once again blazing a trail in the revolution of our railways – and I’ll be fighting our area’s corner every step of the way to make sure we capitalise on this opportunity.”

As part of the government’s Network North plan, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority also received a further £1 billion from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, plus a further £600 million made possible through the decision on Phase 2 of HS2. This is more than double the city’s previous allocation.

Photo credit: Liverpool City Region