

Leaders react to Northern Powerhouse Rail news

November 5, 2022



Following the news this week that Northern Powerhouse Rail is facing further cuts, industry leaders are commenting on the decision.

The decision to make the cuts has been largely unpopular. A formal announcement hasn't been made, however assumptions are being taken based on comments made by ministers such as business secretary Grant Shapps, speaking with the BBC earlier this week, said: "The line itself can deliver a 33-minute journey from Manchester to Leeds, quadruple nearly the capacity of that line, and do so without having to wait an extra 20 years beyond the delivery of what the upgrade can do,"

"There wasn't really much point in going and blasting new tunnels through the Pennines."

His view isn't shared by many representatives in the north, however. The leader of Manchester City Council, Bev Craig, said on Twitter: "'Not much point?' in investing in infrastructure to improve connections, increase capacity and help unlock the economic potential of the North? As for there being no point in digging tunnels, best not tell him about London...."

Lord McLoughlin, Chair of Transport for the North said: “We will wait to see in two weeks’ time what the Autumn Statement says, but the Chancellor made clear in his first statement to the House of Commons last month that he sees capital spending as vital to a credible economic growth strategy; and as TfN’s research has shown, on those terms alone Northern Powerhouse Rail is beneficial to both the national and northern economies.

“In addition, the last Conservative manifesto was clear on its commitment to build NPR. And furthermore, the Transport Select Committee recommended in August, that the government should revisit the evidence base for the decisions that were made on NPR in the Integrated Rail Plan, and the Chair of that committee then is the new Rail Minister.

“TfN Members are clear that building NPR in full via Bradford is the best option to provide the solution to the capacity constraints on our rail network and underpin the long-term sustainable economic growth for our region.”

Henri Murison, chief executive of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership said: “The North’s woeful transport infrastructure continues to weigh down our economy and hold back private investment. “

It remains to be seen what the outcome for Northern Powerhouse Rail will be, although come 17 August, when the full details of the Autumn statement are officially revealed, hopefully there will be some clarity to this confusing situation.