

Northern Powerhouse Rail could boost economy by £22 billion in the next three decades

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One key section of Northern Powerhouse Rail alone could deliver a £22bn boost to the Northern economy by 2060 – nearly £8bn more than previously forecast – according to a new report from global engineering consultancy [Mott MacDonald](#).

A new high-speed rail link between Leeds, Bradford and Manchester could potentially increase productivity by 6% (equivalent to £16.5bn), raise the employment rate by 1.5% (equivalent to £5.5bn), and increase gross value added (GVA) in the North by about 8% over 10 years.

The report, which is being launched today (Tuesday 12 October) in Leeds, says that traditional cost-benefit analysis, has failed to recognise the true economic potential of the scheme.

Henri Murison, director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP), said: “The North is still waiting for the high-speed rail we were promised. Building Northern Powerhouse Rail across the Pennines in full through Bradford would be transformative for our region, attracting investment and creating jobs and opportunities for local people.

“Uncertainty over rail investment, in particular the Eastern Leg of HS2, is doing huge damage to our economy. We need to start building from the North down from Leeds to reach Sheffield to unlock connectivity benefits sooner.

“This is vital to releasing much-needed capacity on the rail line, improving local connections and allowing more goods to be transported by freight instead of heavily-polluting HGV lorries.

“Levelling up cannot and will not happen without the full delivery of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail together.”

When simultaneous action across skills, planning, utility provision, education, tourism, leisure and industrial policy is taken into account, billions more could be added to the Northern economy through delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR).

When taken together, the leading city regions of the North have a higher population than London, but generate less than half the economic output.

Creating better connectivity across the North of England through a new high-speed rail network was at the heart of then-Chancellor George Osborne’s original Northern Powerhouse vision; first proposed in 2014.

Since then, the government has recommitted to delivering the project on a number of occasions, including in Boris Johnson’s first visit to the North as Prime Minister in 2019, but construction has still not been given the green light to commence.

An announcement on NPR was expected in the Prime Minister’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference last week, however the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) remains unpublished more than ten months after it was promised.

Northern leaders have expressed their frustration over repeatedly delays to the IRP, originally due to be published at the end of last year, arguing that confusion and uncertainty is undermining business confidence in the region.

Cathy Travers, Managing Director, UK and Europe, Mott MacDonald, said: “Many of us who live and work in the North of England understand the untapped potential that we have across the region. We know that we need true connectivity to unleash that potential and enhance peoples’ opportunities and drive better social outcomes.

“Northern Powerhouse Rail is a catalyst for this change and we need it urgently. In this report we have applied Mott MacDonald’s leading expertise in economic analysis and our experience of infrastructure investment to show the full economic benefit of delivering a new rail link between Leeds, Bradford and Manchester as the first step in kickstarting a northern renaissance. I believe our paper makes a compelling case for Government backing for Northern Powerhouse Rail in the forthcoming Integrated Rail Plan.”

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

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