

Pan-regional benefits of Northern Powerhouse Rail revealed in new analysis

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The transformational impact of investment in the North of England's rail system has been revealed in new analysis by the region's Sub-national Transport Body.

Latest figures from Transport for the North's rail modelling system show how delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 will result in substantial improvements in connectivity for people and businesses across the region, driving sustainable economic growth. The data reveal that the number of people and businesses within two hours of certain places increases by more than 50 per cent in some instances, with significant benefits for the North-East and parts of Yorkshire.

The figures demonstrate the real-life impact and opportunity from the North's flagship rail project. Northern Powerhouse Rail is a crucial part of realising Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan, published in 2019, and has a key role in enabling sustainable economic growth consistent with TfN's Decarbonisation Strategy, which is due to be finalised later this year.

The benefits of Northern Powerhouse Rail in full to some major cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool are well known, but this analysis shows that the opportunities stretch far beyond these major

cities.

Key findings from the analysis include:

- An additional 49,000 businesses (59 per cent increase) and 1.7 million more people (60 per cent increase) within two hours of Hull.
 - In total 132,000 business and 4.5 million people.
- More than 66,000 extra businesses (45 per cent increase) and 2.2 million more people (43 per cent increase) within two hours of Durham.
 - In total 216,000 businesses and 7.4 million people
- Nearly three million additional people (42 per cent increase) and 94,000 more businesses (43 per cent increase) within two hours of Sheffield.
 - In total 316,000 businesses and 10.1 million people.
- An extra 3.5 million people (45 per cent increase) and 110,000 businesses (45 per cent increase) within two hours of Bradford.
 - In total 353,000 businesses and 11.5 million people.
- More than two million additional people (43 per cent increase) and a further 54,000 businesses (41 per cent increase) within two hours of Darlington.
 - In total 189,000 businesses and 6.8 million people.
- One million more people (33 per cent increase) and an extra 33,000 businesses (33 per cent increase) within two hours of Newcastle.
 - In total 132,000 businesses and 4.7 million people.

The analysis also indicates that there will be considerable benefit to the region's international gateways with more than three million more people (46 per cent increase) within two hours of Manchester Airport and two million additional people (45 per cent increase) within two hours of Durham Tees Valley Airport.

Tim Wood, Northern Powerhouse Rail Director at Transport for the North, said: "Northern Powerhouse Rail is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform the region's railway and radically enhance connectivity between the North's communities, creating jobs and boosting the Northern economy for decades to come.

"The statistics show that the programme will bring people and business across the region closer together, through a metro-style, high-speed, electrified railway, opening up opportunity and rocket-boosting regional economic growth."

Passenger numbers across the North have recovered quickly following the lifting of pandemic restrictions; a reflection of the strong role that rail plays in the North for both business and leisure use. The ambition of the North's political and business leaders means that there is still a need to address the long-term capacity constraints previously identified. Investing in the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail will help build back better and help level up across the North.

Transport for the North continues to work closely with its co-client on the project, the Department for Transport, to drive the scheme forward in preparation for the much-anticipated Integrated Rail Plan. A continued focus on challenging costs is helping ensure the project provides value-for-money for taxpayers and is affordable.

Mr Wood added: "We hope that the significant body of evidence, jointly created with the Department for Transport, will be reflected in an ambitious commitment to the North in the Integrated Rail Plan, alongside a clearly defined role for Transport for the North in delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

"The choices made may well define our region's outcomes for the next century, that is how important this is. The sooner we have clarity on rail investment, the sooner we can press on with delivery for the Northern public."

North of Tyne Mayor Jamie Driscoll said: "Good transport means reliable journeys, less stress and healthier living. People will choose to take the train if they are fast and efficient. Northern Powerhouse Rail does this by improving connectivity to Newcastle and across the wider North. The increase in capacity on the East Coast Main Line is essential in making the network fully connected. That means that we need four tracks north of York. What we now need is firm commitment from Government to turbo-charge plans and make Northern Powerhouse Rail a reality."

Councillor Martin Gannon, Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee and Leader of Gateshead Council, said: "The analysis is clear – Northern Powerhouse Rail and the eastern leg of HS2 will unlock the economic potential of the North East and support the regeneration of our communities by transforming rail links to, and within, all parts of Northern England.

"Bringing millions of people and thousands of businesses closer together by improving regional connectivity to and from the North East is why we support the plans for future investment in both Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Eastern leg of HS2. We want to see the full reopening of the Leamside Line and improvements to the East Coast Main Line in the North East as key parts of the schemes.

"Ahead of the Government's forthcoming Integrated Rail Plan, we are calling for clear commitments to deliver both HS2 and NPR in full as well as upgrading the East Coast Main Line in the North East, to deliver better and more reliable train services that the region needs and deserves."

South Yorkshire Mayor Dan Jarvis said: "I welcome this analysis which spells out exactly why there must be ambitious, transformative investment in our railways in the North. If this Government is really serious about levelling up the country then regular, reliable and affordable public transport for the whole UK should be one of its top priorities.

"We've yet to see the long-awaited Integrated Rail Plan, but if it contains anything less than a commitment to building Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 in full, it will have squandered a vital opportunity to rebuild the Northern economy. This analysis shows just how important Northern Powerhouse Rail is to improving the connectivity and economy of South Yorkshire."

Councillor Daren Hale, Leader of Hull City Council said: "The benefits to Hull of Northern Powerhouse Rail

will help unite our city to the other great cities and regions in the North.

“An electrified railway line to Hull would bring tangible economic benefits for businesses and residents alike and would be a real example of ‘levelling-up.’”

Sir Roger Marsh OBE DL, Chair of the NP11 and Leeds City Region LEP, commented: “Northern Powerhouse Rail will deliver an economic boost to our towns and cities and move the North towards a more integrated economy that will ‘level-up’ the region and boost UK productivity.

“Investing in our region’s rail infrastructure will be a necessity if we are to fully deliver the Government’s levelling-up agenda. The programme will connect the major economic centres of the North as well as under-served communities, generating opportunity, attracting investment, creating jobs, and unleashing our potential.”

Northern Powerhouse Rail is a major strategic rail programme, specifically designed to support the transformation of the North’s economy by providing effective and efficient rail connectivity between the North’s major economic centres, offering a faster and more reliable service across the entire region.

Photo credit: Transport for the North