

TfN launch campaign to bring GBR HQ to the north

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“Great British Railways’ national headquarters can be anywhere as long as it’s based in the North.”

That’s the message from Transport for the North (TfN), which has launched a campaign in support of the four shortlisted locations in the North of England bidding to be the new home of Britain’s railways.

The public vote has already begun to decide Great British Railways’ HQ and will go until 15 August with the Transport Secretary making the final decision later this year.

Of the six shortlisted potential locations, four are in the North: Crewe, Doncaster, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and York.

As part of its campaign TfN says the case for the North is strong:

- The North is geographically placed at the heart of the GB Rail Network, and close proximity to major hubs with the main North-South rail arteries of ECML and WCML passing through it.
- It is already home to many rail businesses, and over the next two decades major projects such as HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail will be built in the North, making the region a railway powerhouse.
- The rail heritage is unrivalled as the region is the birthplace of the country's rail network, and basing GBR HQ here would be a kind of homecoming for the railway.
- Basing the GBR HQ in the North will further help 'Levelling Up' the UK by bringing some high skill jobs and investment to the region as well as supporting many of those already here.

From now until the close of polls TfN will be helping to make the case for each of these locations to ensure that GBR HQ is #NorthBased

Martin Tugwell, CEO of TfN, said: "The new Great British Railways' headquarters can be anywhere, as long as it's here in the North. TfN will be making the case for it to be based here in the heart of the country over the coming weeks.

"Our country's national railway is over 200 years old, but few people know that our rail network was born here in the North of England with the very first railways and stations. By basing GBR here it will be a homecoming.

"It will also make the most strategic sense for the country as many rail businesses and supply chains are here in the North, and the region straddles two of the main rail arteries in the UK in the East Coast Mainline and West Coast Mainline and will be the location for the biggest rail investment over the next three decades in Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2.

"The North is also at the forefront of the government's 'Levelling Up' agenda, and therefore the investment and high skilled jobs it would bring to the region would be a key signal on the start of delivering on this aspiration."

Cheshire East Council deputy leader Cllr Craig Browne said: "Crewe is at the heart of the rail network, and is the gateway to the north. It is the only northern candidate with direct connectivity to the capital cities of England, Scotland & Wales. The town was born out of the railway and bringing Great British Railways to Crewe would be a fitting next chapter in its rail story."

North of Tyne Mayor Jamie Driscoll said: "This would be a symbolic homecoming and a fantastic opportunity to create new jobs. The North East was once the home of the locomotive - it should be again.

"Rather than leaving the north behind we should be putting it first by basing the railways here, and Newcastle offers a perfect location for GBR linked to heritage sites and the facilities to support a 21st century headquarters."

North Yorkshire County Council leader Cllr Carl Les said: "The benefits of the Integrated Rail Plan will be felt right across the North of England and to have the new home of Great British Railways in the region will help to achieve the government's Levelling Up ambitions.

“York has an extensive rail heritage and the right skills and people to make GBR a success. York Central, the largest city centre brownfield site in England, presents a unique opportunity to create Britain’s biggest rail cluster and inspire the next generation of northern-based rail professionals.”

South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard said: “The people who live and work in the North deserve a rail network that is fit for purpose. By having Great British Railways based here would be a big step in the right direction and will help to highlight the needs of the region.

“Doncaster is an archetypal railway city and the place that built the world-famous Flying Scotsman and the Mallard. It is ideally placed to be the new home of Great British Railways in the heart of South Yorkshire and as a gateway to the North.”

Photo credit: Transport for the North