

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements)
Order [NR/PoE/MA/1.2]



TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992
TRANSPORT AND WORKS (INQUIRIES PROCEDURES)
RULES 2004
NETWORK RAIL (STALYBRIDGE TO DIGGLE
(SADDLEWORTH) ENHANCEMENTS) ORDER

NEEDS CASE AND PROJECT BENEFITS
PROOF OF EVIDENCE
of
Mark Ashton

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The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026

[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

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CONTENTS

1.INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Order.....	1
1.2 Qualifications and experience.....	1
1.3 Role on the project.....	1
1.4 Statement of Matters.....	2
2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE.....	3
3. SCHEME INTRODUCTION.....	4
3.1 The existing Transpennine rail route.....	4
3.2 Existing Constraints – The Scheme Route.....	6
3.3 Purpose of the Order Scheme.....	7
3.4 The Order Scheme.....	8
3.5 Economic Need.....	10
3.6 Need Post-Covid.....	14
3.7 Environmental Need.....	16
3.8 Level crossing Safety Need.....	17
4. REGULATORY & POLICY BACKGROUND.....	18
5. THE BUSINESS CASE.....	22
5.1 Funding for the order Scheme.....	22
5.2 Strategic Context.....	23
5.3 Rebalancing the Economy.....	26
5.4 Business Case Review.....	27
6. BENEFITS OF TRU.....	28
6.1 Order Scheme Benefits and the contribution to the TRU Aims.....	28
6.2 The Order Scheme Benefits.....	30

7. EARLY SCHEME DEVELOPMENT.....	32
7.1 Current State.....	32
7.2 Strategic Alternatives.....	33
7.3 Future Rail Schemes.....	34
7.4 Non-Infrastructure Alternatives.....	35
7.5 Scheme Alternatives.....	35
8. CONSULTATION.....	36
8.2 Publicising the Consultation.....	38
8.3 Public Consultation – Phase 1.....	38
8.4 Public Consultation – Phase 2 – Moorgate Halt Level crossing.....	39
8.5 Focused Engagement – Phase 3 – Mossley Cottages.....	39
8.6 Public Information Event – Phase 4.....	39
8.7 Focused Engagement – Phase 5 – Manchester Road Residents.....	39
8.8 Focused Engagement – Phase 6 – Manchester Road Residents	40
8.9 Ongoing Engagement.....	40
9. OBJECTIONS REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT....	41
10. RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS.....	42
10.1 Mossley Station Relocation.....	42
10.2 Inadequate Consultation.....	43
10.3 Future Service Patterns.....	43
10.4 Request for a New Station at Diggle.....	44
11. CONCLUSION.....	44
12. WITNESS DECLARATION.....	45
12.1 Statement of Declaration.....	45

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026**[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]***Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits***Figures**

Figure 3-1 Location of the TRU and component projects.....	5
Figure 3-2 GVA per head for UK cities and cities in other selected countries.....	11
Figure 3-3 Average Performance of the Transpennine Route pre-COVID.....	12
Figure 3-4 Passenger journeys by Train Operating Company (“TOC”).....	12
Figure 3-5 Scenarios for post-COVID revenue rebound relative to “no COVID”.....	15
forecast (blue) (National scenarios) Source: DfT Rail Analysis.	
Figure 4-1: Maturity of the TRU projects (noting W2B/C is at ‘Design’ maturity.....	20
stage).	
Figure 7-1 PACE phase gate process.....	36

Table

Table 8-1. Summary of the public and stakeholder (statutory and landowner) consultation and focused engagement/information events.....	37
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Decision letter for the Network Rail Huddersfield to Westtown Dewsbury Order.

Appendix 2 – Decision letter for the Church Fenton Level Crossing Reduction Project.

Appendix 3 – Decision letter for the Leeds to Micklefield Enhancements Order.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026

[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

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The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Order

- 1.1.1 On 7 November 2025 Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd (“Network Rail”) applied to the Secretary of State for Transport for the Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order (the Order). The application was made under Sections 1 and 5 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 (the TWA).
- 1.1.2 The purpose of the Order, if made, is to give Network Rail the necessary powers to construct, operate and maintain an improved railway, including the upgrade and reconstruction of the existing railway, railway electrification works and associated works on the Transpennine line between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth), The Order also authorises the construction of a new relocated station at Mossley, railway electrification works and bridge reconstruction works. The Order also confers powers to close and replace existing level crossings at Stockport Road and Moorgate Halt.

1.2 Qualifications and experience

- 1.2.1 My name is Mark Ashton. I am an employee at Network Rail, responsible for Infrastructure Sponsorship, Consents and Stakeholder Management. My academic qualifications include a BSc Honours degree in Geology and a BEng Honours degree in Civil Engineering. I am a chartered member of the Association of Project Management.
- 1.2.2 I have worked within the rail industry since 2013 starting as Scheme Project Manager for Network Rail, responsible for delivering renewals and enhancement schemes for railway infrastructure projects, and then as Sponsor for the North West & Central Route in 2018, delivering enhancement projects requiring regulatory and third party consents. From 2019 I have been a Sponsor on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU).

1.3 Role on the project

- 1.3.1 My current role is as a Network Rail Sponsor for the TRU, with responsibility for securing all necessary consents and authorities for the TRU in relation to the W2B/C project of which the order submission is a component part. I provide a direct link between Network Rail and its client for this Scheme, the Department for Transport (“DfT”).

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

1.4 Statement of Matters

1.4.1 The Statement of Matters (“SOM”) was received from the Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit (“TIPU”) in April 2026. The following matters will be dealt with solely in my proof of evidence:

- Matter 1 - The aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements works ("the Scheme"), including its effects on railway operations and whether all statutory procedural requirements have been complied with and sufficient information was available to parties about the Scheme.

1.4.2 The following Matter will be dealt with by this proof, read in combination with the proofs of Ms Emma Clarke [NR/PoE/EC/2.2], Mr Jerry Greenwood [NR/PoE/JG/9.2], Mr Lee Barraclough [NR/PoE/LB/11.2] and Mr Laurie Barbour [NR/PoE/LB/13.2].

- Matter 2 - The main alternative options considered by NR and the reasons for choosing the proposals set out in the Order.

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 This Proof of Evidence is presented in the following sections:

- Introduction
- Scope of Evidence
- Scheme Introduction
- Regulatory and Policy Background
- The Business Case
- Benefits of TRU
- Early Scheme Development
- Consultation
- Response to Objections
- Conclusion

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

3. SCHEME INTRODUCTION

3.1 The existing Transpennine rail route

- 3.1.1 Transport plays a vital role in enabling a modern trading economy and rail has a particular advantage in connecting cities, both to each other and to their markets. The Transpennine rail route is, along with the M62, one of the key East-West arteries across the Northern economy. The Transpennine rail route forms the most direct existing rail link between Manchester and Leeds but is also used as a “spine” to link a wider set of economic centres such as Newcastle and Hull in the East, and Liverpool in the West. As well as linking city centres, the Transpennine rail route also joins these to smaller towns and commuting areas, and key sites such as Manchester Airport and university and research centres (including other hubs like York and Huddersfield). The route also serves an important economic function in terms of supporting freight flows (typically 5-10 trains over the Pennine section per day) as one of the most direct East-West corridors across the North.
- 3.1.2 Stretching across the North of England between York and Manchester, via Leeds and Huddersfield, the 76-mile Transpennine rail route serves 23 stations, crosses over and dips under 285 bridges, viaducts, passes through six miles of tunnels, and crosses over 29 level crossings.
- 3.1.3 The first two-track section of the route, between Huddersfield and Stalybridge, was opened in 1849, with a four track route completed in 1894 between Stalybridge and Leeds. Historically there was a long period of underinvestment in the route, starting in the 1960s and going through to the 1980s, during a time when demand for passenger and freight traffic on the route was declining, in line with structural economic change. Infrastructure capacity was degraded over the years to reduce operating and renewal costs, ordinarily through reducing previously prevalent sections of four-tracking to two tracks, as the mix of slow freight and fast passenger traffic requiring segregation reduced. During this period in the Scheme area, four tracks were reduced to two tracks between Stalybridge and Leeds, leading to a significant reduction in capacity.

The TRU

- 3.1.4 The TRU is a major, multi-billion pound long-term programme of rail investment to modernise and improve the strategic east-west railway linking Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York. The programme comprises a series of coordinated enhancement projects delivered along the Transpennine corridor, aimed at increasing capacity, reducing journey times and improving the reliability and resilience of rail services across the North of England. TRU addresses long-standing constraints associated with ageing infrastructure, growing passenger demand and historic under-investment, while supporting

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026 [NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

wider economic growth, levelling-up objectives and the transition to a lower-carbon transport system through route electrification and proposed digital signalling. Owing to the scale and complexity of the railway, the programme is being delivered in phases through multiple interdependent projects, each contributing to the delivery of the overall programme benefits. For further information on the background to the TRU and more specifically the Order scheme refer to (NR30).

3.1.5 More specifically, the TRU comprises a series of projects between Manchester to Leeds and Leeds to York. The projects shown in figure 3-1 below are at different stages of development and delivery. For example, Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge (W1/W2a) and York to Colton Junction (part of Project E1) have been delivered and entered into service. The Huddersfield to Westtown Project (W3) Transport & Works Act Order was approved and made in 2022, the Church Fenton Level Crossing Reduction TWAO (E1) was approved and made in November 2023 and the Leeds to Micklefield TWAO (E234) was approved and made in October 2024 - all now in the construction phase.



Figure 3-1 Location of the TRU and component projects.

3.1.6 Today, there is currently a single passenger operator Transpennine Express (“TPE”) providing services across the Scheme Route . TPE provide fast and frequent inter-city services across the North of England, typically 4 trains per hour (all day) starting from a number of origins in the North West (Liverpool & Manchester) to destinations in the North East (Leeds, York, Hull, Scarborough,

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

Redcar & Newcastle). TPE also currently operate key local and commuter services into Manchester, Leeds and York, and other local centres, typically 2 trains per hour (peak time only). The same Transpennine route also supports freight services, with around five a day in each direction currently.

3.1 Existing Constraints – The Scheme Route

- 3.2.1 The Scheme Route includes 11km of track and two stations at Mossley and Greenfield. This part of the Transpennine rail route suffers from a number of constraints which contribute to adversely affecting the capacity and reliability of the Transpennine route as a whole and which, without address, would prevent the modernisation of the Transpennine route and the realisation of the full benefits of the wider Transpennine Route Upgrade (“TRU”) programme. The key constraints on the Scheme Route are:
- 3.2.2 **Line speed:** Currently the Scheme Route is operated with line speeds of between 50-65mph which are not sufficient to significantly contribute to improvements in journey times across the Scheme Route that is required to support the delivery of the wider TRU benefits.
- 3.2.3 **The current Mossley station:** affords only stepped passenger access to the rail network which is not aligned to the TRU outcomes of step free access to stations, including longer platforms and wider platforms where required. Due to the current station location, (built within a rock cutting), the resultant engineering challenges make modernisation of the station aligned to the wider TRU outputs cost prohibitive.
- 3.2.4 **Existing bridge structures** that cross the Scheme Route create a physical impediment to the installation of the OLE required for the electrification of the Scheme Route and the ability to operate larger freight containerisation on the Scheme Route. This therefore limits the train rolling stock that can operate on the Scheme Route to diesel trains only and also limits the container size that can be carried by freight services that operate on the Scheme Route.
- 3.2.5 **PROWs** intersect the railway at two existing level crossings on the Scheme Route. In particular these two existing level crossings act as constraints to the stated aims of the Order Scheme to increase capacity (more frequent trains) improve journey times (faster trains) and improve reliability (through electrification), on the Scheme Route as is required to support the delivery of the wider TRU benefits.
- 3.2.6 **Moorgate Halt level crossing** is, as of the date of the application for the Order, temporarily closed under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) due to recent infrastructure changes to the track and signalling on this part of the

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

Scheme Route. This TTRO is to be extended because of the likelihood of danger to the public, which could result in a train straddling the level crossing when stopped at a red signal.

3.2.7 Performance and reliability issues for Transpennine Route services are routinely encountered on the Scheme Route.

3.2.8 The Scheme Route is currently not well placed as an enabler in contributing to the levelling up of the North of England and making it a more productive economic region. Investment in rail infrastructure and rolling stock is vital to support national, regional and local economic growth. In the next two sections I provide my evidence on why I believe there is a compelling case for railway investment along the Order scheme route and what that investment will deliver through unlocking opportunities for businesses through better connectivity, encourage investment, and stimulate job creation, generated directly and indirectly by the Order Scheme.

3.2.9 I turn now from the need for the Scheme to consider its purpose in more detail.

3.3 Purpose of the Order Scheme

3.3.1 The purpose of the Order Scheme is to increase capacity, improve journey time and reliability performance of railway services on the Transpennine route both between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) and between Manchester, Leeds and York. In addition, by closing two existing level crossings the Order Scheme will also improve safety on the on the Transpennine route both between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) and between Manchester, Leeds and York .

The Order Scheme, together with the wider Scheme works, are a key contributor towards the delivery of the TRU programme aims, which are:

- More trains to choose from and more seats.
- Faster Journeys.
- More reliable journeys (better performance).
- Better stations and improved passenger experience.
- Greener travel (decarbonisation and air quality).
- Increased freight capacity and capability (supporting a modal shift).

3.3.2 The Scheme is a component part of a wider programme of works known as the TRU. The TRU is a series of railway upgrade projects between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York with the objective being to improve

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

journey times and capacity between key destinations on the Transpennine route, improve overall reliability and resilience on the Transpennine route and provide environmental benefits through modal shift to rail and electrification of the Transpennine route.

- 3.3.3 The Scheme will be constructed on land which consists of both operation railway land and land outside of Network Rail's ownership. The current operational railway consists of a two-track railway, therefore for the most part the railway corridor is sufficiently wide to accommodate the proposed works.
- 3.3.4 To deliver TRU's objectives of journey time and capacity improvements on the Transpennine route, there is a need to increase the line speeds on the Stalybridge to Diggle section of the Transpennine route, with current line speeds ranging from 50mph up to 65mph, the linespeed will be increased up to 80mph in places.
- 3.3.5 As such, the Order, if made, would enable Network Rail to carry out works necessary to ensure that the upgrade of this part of the TRU can be delivered and is required to ensure that the full benefits of the wider TRU programme can be achieved.
- 3.3.6 If made, I believe the Order Scheme together with the wider Scheme will deliver the improvements required to the existing rail infrastructure on the Scheme route and will be a key contributor towards delivering the overall TRU programme aims.

3.4 The Order Scheme

- 3.4.1 In order to facilitate the increase in line speeds, capacity improvements, and enhancements to resilience reliability and Mossley Station, a number of works are required across the W2B footprint. These works are not only those applied for under this Order application, but works consented and allowed for Network Rail via other consent regimes. That could be deemed planning permissions, use of Permitted Development powers afforded to Network Rail, including the submission of two LBC applications. Other Scheme works which are not the subject of the application for the Order or Request for Deemed Planning Permission, but which are being delivered under permitted development rights conferred on Network Rail by the General Permitted Development Order are subject to separate requests for prior approval. The Order will bring together all remaining works, rights, and consents required to ensure that the benefits required across the W2B footprint, can be delivered in full, contributing to the TRU programme benefits, and allow for all works to be delivered in a time and cost efficient manner, delivering full value for money across all TRU projects.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 3.4.2 The Order Scheme will be constructed on land which consists of both operational railway land and land outside of Network Rail's ownership, and in respect of which it seeks power pursuant to the Order to either compulsorily acquire (land or rights) or temporarily use land, together with the ability to carry out highway alterations, stopping up and diversion of roads, footpaths and bridleways (temporary and permanent) and close two level crossings.
- 3.4.3 In its consultation material preceding the application, Network Rail broke down the Order Scheme into 12 elements by geographical location running west to east (Stalybridge to Diggle).
- 3.4.4 Those elements are named below, and summarised in Section 3 of the Statement of Case (**NR30**), with further detail on each provided within Section 7 and 8 of the Statement of Case.
- Work No. 1. The reconstruction of Heyrod Hall overbridge (MVL3/7), including works to construct a temporary bridge over the existing railway, upgrade an existing private access road served by this overbridge up to its junction with Printworks Road and associated utilities diversion works.
 - Work No. 2. The reconstruction of Manchester Road footbridge (MVL3/10A).
 - Work No. 3. The construction of a new Mossley Station to be located west of Manchester Road approximately 300 metres north of the site of the existing Mossley station, comprising the construction of station platforms, station entrance building (with ticketing and staffing facilities), station footbridge and lift shafts and associated station parking areas. These works will also include the provision of access to the new station from Manchester Road, a new pedestrian access route between the existing Mossley Station and the new relocated station and the re-location of bus stops on Manchester Road.
 - Work No. 4. The reconstruction of Roughtown Road footbridge (MVL3/18).
 - Work No. 5. The reconstruction of Wright's Mill overbridge (MVL3/20).
 - Work No. 6 The reconstruction of Royal George underbridge (MVL3/25).
 - Work No. 7. The construction of a new footbridge at Oldham Road (Oldham Road footbridge (MVL3/28/B)) over the existing railway.
 - Work No. 8. The reconstruction of Oldham Road overbridge (MVL3/28).
 - Work No. 9. The reconstruction of Ward Lane overbridge (MVL3/36), including works to construct a temporary bridge over the existing railway

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- Work No. 10. The partial reconstruction of Station Road overbridge (MVL3/39), including the construction of a temporary utility bridge over the existing railway.

The Order will also provide for:-

- The closure of the Stockport Road level crossing and works to provide a diversion route for the existing PROW that crosses the Stockport Road level crossing; and
- The closure of the Moorgate Halt level crossing and works to enhance the existing PROW network between Oldham Road and Ladcastle Road, which passes under MVL3/29 Wickens Underbridge, to provide an alternative footpath route following the closure of the Moorgate Halt level crossing.

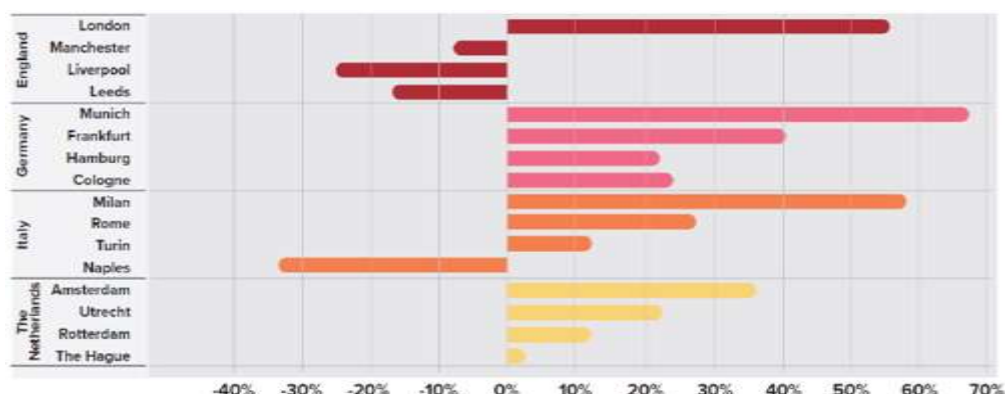
3.5 Economic Need

- 3.5.1 Up to the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, demand on the route had doubled to 50 million journeys per year since the mid-1990s, noting route demand has now returned to Pre-COVID levels, but the historic reduction in the carrying capacity of the infrastructure meant the route had reached the practical limit of its capacity, Pre-COVID, the route performed poorly and would form a constraint, rather than an enabler, to building back the Northern economy - unless the Order scheme works are carried out.
- 3.5.2 Overall productivity in the North trails behind the UK average. For the last 30 years, the North's economic value per person, measured as Gross Value Added (GVA) has been consistently below the average for the rest of the UK. The widening gap can be attributed to the North of England generally experiencing slower GVA growth rates over the last decade compared to the UK average, with evidence showing low levels of transport investment being a contributing factor to the low levels of growth. The chart below in Figure 3-2 indicates the GVA per head differences between key cities in the North and London, and also between cities in selected other countries, pre-COVID. The UK had (and continues to have) the distinction of having the widest regional GVA per head disparity amongst the OECD countries.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

Figure 3-2 GVA per head for UK cities and cities in other selected countries



Source: National Infrastructure Commission calculations using OECD Statistics. Functional Urban Areas and National level, 2018 (except France where latest urban productivity data is 2016). Productivity in English cities has been calculated as a percentage of the UK average.

- 3.5.3 Punctuality on the Transpennine route was very poor pre-COVID, with only 38% of trains On Time (making station calls within a minute of the scheduled time). This compared with other major rail lines, such as East Coast Mainline (ECML) and West Coast Mainline (WCML) that had On Time performance scores of 57% & 65% pre-Covid (2018-2019).
- 3.5.4 Poor performance along the Transpennine route, see figure 3-3, has primarily been due to an absence of infrastructure capacity (passing sections and separate fast and slow lines) to regulate the large mix of service types on the wider route (slow freights, local passenger trains and fast express) and mitigate delays. These often occur further afield – and can quickly spread from the TRU route across the North. Delays on the route regularly create consequential timing issues for other lines across the North and into Scotland.
- 3.5.5 Although the provision of new, longer, rolling stock has started to mitigate peak-time overcrowding on the trains that currently run along Transpennine route, there is no room for additional passenger services to serve a recovering and growing economy, and train speeds are relatively slow for the distances involved (less than 60mph on average for the fastest trains along the Transpennine route).

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

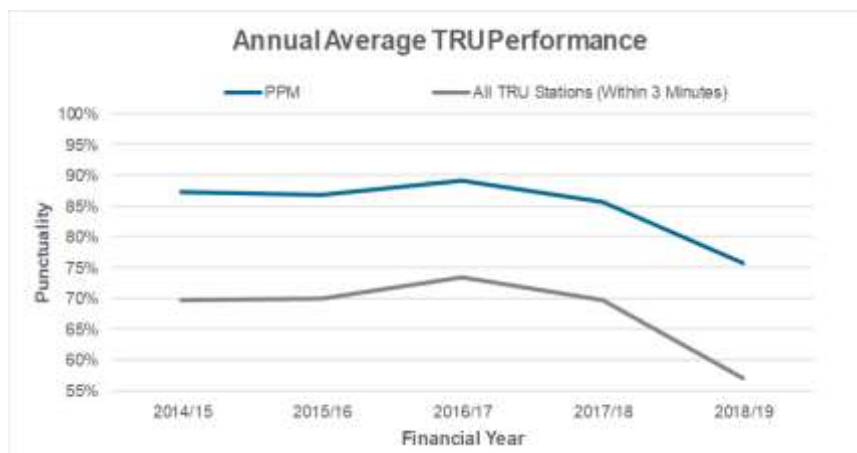


Figure 3-3 Average Performance of the Transpennine Route pre-COVID.

(Source: Office of Road and Rail performance monitoring statistics). Note: Overall Public Performance Measure (PPM) has recovered to approximately 85% in 2024/25.

- 3.5.6 In the years before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, growth was indeed proportionately greater in the North than in other regions, albeit from a low aggregate base. ORR data for the period pre-COVID shows that rail travel, within the North grew at an annual rate of over 6%, compared with just over 4% at a national level. In addition, growth in longer-distance passenger services was higher along Transpennine route than for other services. The TPE franchise grew at rates comparable with the main West Coast and East Coast operators during the 2010s, as shown in Figure 3-4 below.

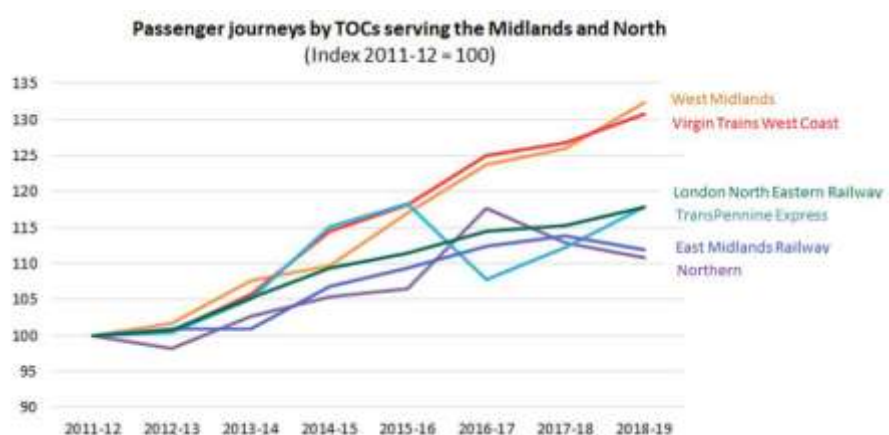


Figure 3-4 Passenger journeys by Train Operating Company (“TOC”)

(Source: DfT Rail Analysis <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics>)

- 3.5.7 Whilst TPE has continued to provide a greater number of passenger services since 2016, the relative reduction in the Northern services reflects the

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

performance issues referred to earlier in 3.4.4 and figure 3-3, that the Transpennine route has faced in recent years. Increasing the capacity and thereby improving the resilience and reliability for both ‘express’ and ‘local’ services, is critical to enable continued growth of the Transpennine route and its associated routes.

- 3.5.8 The amount of historic investment on East-West routes (excluding the southeast), such as the Transpennine route, has not matched that of typical north – south rail lines connecting to the London and South East markets, such as the East Coast Mainline, or West Coast Mainline. Providing much improved rail services on the Manchester-Leeds-York corridor would help contribute to the Government’s levelling-up agenda – both in terms of facilitating the continued post-COVID economic recovery and growth but in offering citizens in the North a brighter economic future.
- 3.5.9 In approving the Huddersfield to Westtown Project (W3) Transport & Works Act Order (“W3”) in 2022, the Secretary of State (“SoS”) acknowledged in their decision letter (Appendix 1) at paragraph 14, that train services regularly encounter congestion and delays on the Transpennine route, resulting in performance and reliability issues for those services. The SoS also agreed with the Inspector’s view at paragraph 16 that The Transpennine route does not currently meet the needs of passengers and, like the Inspectors view at paragraph 17 the SoS agreed upgrading the route is necessary to enable much needed improvement in passenger and freight services.
- 3.5.10 In approving the Church Fenton Level Crossing Reduction Project (E1) Transport & Works Act Order (“E1”) in 2023, the SoS also acknowledged in their decision letter (Appendix 2) at paragraph 14, that the works in that Order, similar to those promoted in this Order scheme, would help to contribute towards the safety, reliability and resilience of an important railway line in the North of England delivering substantial public benefits across the region.
- 3.5.11 In approving the Leeds to Micklefield Enhancements Transport & Works Act Order (“E234”) in 2024, in the SoS’s decision letter (Appendix 3) at paragraph 13, the Inspector highlighted that the works in that Order, similar to those promoted in this Order scheme, is in urgent need of improvement, the purpose of which to improve journey times and capacity between key destinations of the Transpennine route.
- 3.5.12 I believe there is a clear economic need for the Order Scheme as an essential component of the Transpennine Route Upgrade. The Transpennine route is a principal east–west corridor for the Northern economy, but historic underinvestment has resulted in reduced infrastructure capability and a railway that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was operating at (or close to) the

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

practical limit of its capacity, with relatively slow journey times and materially weaker punctuality than comparator main lines. Those constraints are significant in the context of the longstanding productivity shortfall across the North, reflected in persistent GVA-per-head disparities between northern cities and London and in international comparisons. Against that background, and noting that demand on the route had grown substantially to around 50 million journeys per annum pre-COVID and has since returned to comparable levels, the existing capacity and performance limitations restrict the ability to accommodate further passenger growth and to support efficient freight movements, thereby inhibiting connectivity and the wider economic benefits associated with labour market access and agglomeration. Accordingly, improved rail services on the Manchester–Leeds–York corridor are required to support economic recovery and the Government’s levelling-up objectives. That need has been recognised in recent Secretary of State decision letters for related TWA Orders (including W3, E1 and E234), which acknowledge the presence of congestion and performance issues on the Transpennine corridor and the necessity of infrastructure interventions to secure improved passenger and freight outcomes, to which the Order Scheme works contribute.

3.6 Need Post - Covid

- 3.6.1 At the start of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic struck, with social and economic Government-imposed restrictions applying from the latter part of March 2020. This had a major impact on demand for rail travel. Nationally, passenger rail ticket sales fell to just 4% of the level seen in the previous year (2019), recovering to just over 30% of that level by September 2020 (Source: Covid and Rail Demand Forecasting - Uncertainty and its Consequences, DfT Rail Analysis, November 2020). Although, this then declined again following announcement of the second lockdown in November 2020. Rail use in the North seems to have held up better than the national average: the lowest level of patronage recorded in Greater Manchester has been around 20% of pre-COVID levels, with figures in Greater Manchester now back to 91% of pre-covid patronage (Source: Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Transport Sub-Committee Local Rail Services Performance Report, March 2023). This is thought to reflect the socio-economic mix and lower scope for homeworking in Northern populations compared with, say, London.
- 3.6.2 Once the immediate COVID-related impact on rail travel had subsided, there was uncertainty regarding any impact on long-term travel demand and, within that, the demand for rail services. DfT’s latest modelling scenarios suggested late-2020s demand growth could be between 68% (worst case) and 97% (best case) of pre-COVID levels (see Figure 3-5 below).

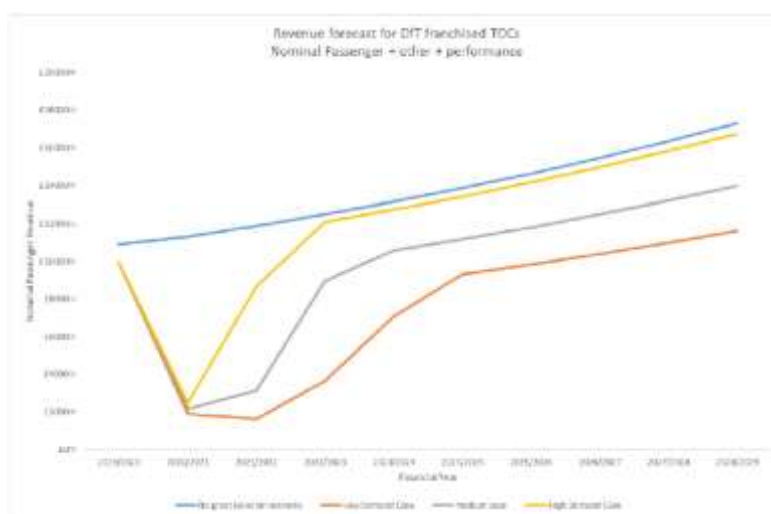
The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

At the strategic level however, the scenario analysis indicated that even in the low demand (red) case, demand was likely to have come back to at least the levels seen in 2018/19 by the end of this decade (and may have grown further - noting route demand has now returned to Pre-COVID levels). Even if one were to consider the future performance of the Transpennine route against the static 2018/19 levels of travel demand, early investment would have been crucial when looking to rectify the chronic problems the Transpennine route faced in service and performance. Some level of overall growth in demand this decade is still to be expected, reinforcing the need to invest in the Transpennine route now from a transport management perspective.

- 3.6.3 With rail passenger numbers and demand having now returned to pre COVID-19 levels, in offering much improved rail services and enhancing passengers daily lives, rail investment on the Manchester-Leeds-York corridor can contribute strongly to the “levelling up” agenda – both in terms of accelerating the post-COVID economic recovery, offering citizens in the North a brighter future.
- 3.6.4 It is highly likely passenger demand on the Transpennine route will surpass pre-Covid forecast levels before the TRU Programme, including W2B/C, is completed and operational in 2033.

Figure 3-5: Scenarios for post-COVID revenue rebound relative to “no COVID” forecast (blue) (National scenarios) Source: DfT Rail Analysis



- 3.6.5 I regard the need for the Scheme remains compelling in the post-COVID context. While the pandemic caused an unprecedented, short-term reduction in rail demand, patronage in the North recovered more quickly than the national

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

average and demand on the Transpennine route has now returned to broadly pre-COVID levels. Although early forecasting highlighted uncertainty about longer-term demand, the Department for Transport's scenario analysis indicated that demand would recover materially even in a low-demand case and, on current trends, is likely to exceed pre-COVID expectations before the TRU programme (including W2B/C) is fully operational. In those circumstances, early delivery of infrastructure improvements is required to address the existing capacity and performance constraints on the corridor and to support the continued post-COVID economic recovery and the levelling-up objectives which the Scheme is intended to facilitate.

3.7 Environmental Need

- 3.7.1 The Government has committed in the National Infrastructure Strategy (HM Treasury, 2020) to 'Put the UK on the path to meeting its net zero emissions target by 2050: bold action is needed to transform the UK's infrastructure to meet net zero and climate change commitments. The Government will continue to decarbonise the UK's power, heat and transport networks – which together account for over two-thirds of UK emissions - and take steps to adapt to the risks posed by climate change' ("Net Zero Target").
- 3.7.2 The Transpennine route is currently a diesel-operated railway. The design of TRU has been informed by an aspiration to electrify as much of the Transpennine route as possible, in line with the Government's Net Zero Target and outlined through the Government's commitments in the Decarbonising Transport, A Better Greener Britain (**NR95**). Alongside modal shift, encouraged by more reliable and frequent passenger trains, TRU aims to make a strong contribution to the Net Zero Target, as the largest rail enhancement in the current portfolio. In addition, facilitating a move from diesel to electric traction will bring improvements to local air quality through a reduction in oxides of nitrogen and particulate emissions, especially in the main urban areas served by the Transpennine route.
- 3.7.3 As highlighted in this section, decarbonisation of the rail network is a key Government aim and is supported by Network Rail's own environmental policies. To hit decarbonisation targets and help achieve the national Net Zero Target, electrification of existing rail lines is considered a key facilitator. With electrification comes the requirement to install and operate electrification equipment (stanchions, overhead wires etc), which require greater clearance distances between these pieces of equipment and structures from vehicles passing underneath.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 3.7.4 As part of the Scheme, the line from Stalybridge through to Diggle will be electrified, helping to contribute to local and the national climate targets highlighted above.
- 3.7.5 There is a clear environmental need for the Scheme. Government policy commits to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with the decarbonisation of transport identified as a necessary component of that objective. The Transpennine route is presently operated using diesel traction, and TRU has been developed to deliver route electrification alongside service improvements that support modal shift to rail. The Scheme will deliver electrification between Stalybridge and Diggle, the penultimate section to provide continuous electrification on the TRU route, thereby reducing diesel operation on the corridor and contributing to national and local climate objectives, as well as improving local air quality through reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulates.

3.8 Level Crossing Safety Need

- 3.8.1 This section of evidence should be read in conjunction with the proofs of evidence of James Doodson [NR/PoE/JD/10.2] ((Network Rail - Route Level Crossing Manager, North West) and Jerry Greenwood [NR/PoE/JG/9.2] (Head of Liability Negotiation for Network Rail).
- 3.8.2 Safety is paramount in all that Network Rail does. All level crossings carry risk and they are the largest single contributors to train accidents and risks on the railway network. Moorgate Halt level crossing addressed in the Order has historical known incidents due to misuse which have contributed to a negative impact on the performance of the rail network. Stockport Road level crossing, historically a lower risk crossing due to low pedestrian usage still carries a risk owing to it being an unprotected crossing.
- 3.8.3 The delivery of safe passage across the railway for Public Right of Way users will remove the existing risks associated with conflicts between trains and public and avoids any increases in these risks to unacceptable levels due to faster and more frequent trains and the presence of OLE. As part of its statutory duty to minimise risk to railway users, workforce and the public, Network Rail has adopted a long-term strategy to improve level crossing safety (Enhancing Level Crossing Safety, Network Rail 2019-2029) (**NR77**). This strategy notes that level crossings are one of the main public safety risks on the railway. The only way to remove the risk is by removing the at grade interface.
- 3.8.4 The Order scheme will remove the existing at-grade interfaces at Stockport Road and Moorgate Halt level crossings between the railway and those wishing to cross it, thus removing the safety risk currently associated with the level crossings. In addition, users of the level crossings will no longer have to

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

wait to cross the railway and will be able to safely access either side of the rail lines 24 hours a day. As well as a safety benefit, this further drives the operational efficiencies created by removing level crossings as the scope for incidents to occur where at grade crossings are removed is reduced greatly.

- 3.8.5 There is a clear safety need for the Scheme in relation to the closure of Stockport Road and Moorgate Halt level crossings. Level crossings represent a significant and well-recognised source of risk on the railway, Network Rail has a statutory duty to reduce risks to members of the public so far as reasonably practicable. In the absence of intervention, the planned intensification of rail operations associated with the wider TRU programme (including higher line speeds, more frequent services and the introduction of overhead line equipment) would increase the potential consequences and exposure at these interfaces. The Scheme addresses that risk directly by closing the level crossings and providing alternative routes for users, thereby removing the train–public conflict at source and delivering a permanent reduction in risk, alongside associated operational benefits through reduced scope for incidents that can disrupt services.

4 REGULATORY & POLICY BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In this section I will discuss the funding framework that underpins all rail enhancement schemes, noting the current funding status of the TRU projects.

I then go on to discuss how the Government's funding and expectations are articulated through national guidance and rail strategy and why investment in the rail network between Stalybridge to Diggle is needed to align with national rail, transport, economic and sustainability policy, including the Government's Strategic Vision for Rail.

The last three paragraphs set out Network Rail's statutory safety duties and policy approach to level crossing risk, highlighting the strong regulatory and policy presumption in favour of level crossing closure where reasonably practicable, and situating the Scheme within Network Rail's long-term strategy to reduce safety risk and deliver a safer, more efficient railway.

- 4.1.1 Network Rail is regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The ORR conducts a five-yearly (control period) review which sets out Network Rail's future funding and what Network Rail must achieve within the relevant control period in accordance with, but not exclusive to, the Government's Rail Network's Enhancement Pipeline ("RNEP"), 2019 (**NR32**). The RNEP sets four priorities for investment summarised as:

- Keeping people and goods moving smoothly and safely;

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- Delivering the benefits from committed programmes and projects already underway;
- Offering new and better journeys and opportunities for the future; and
- Changing the way the rail sector works for the better.

4.1.3 The RNEP sets out the rationale behind creating a rolling programme of investment which focusses on delivering real benefits for passengers, freight users and the economy.

4.1.4 The RNEP approach applies to all rail enhancements within England and Wales which are in receipt of funding from central Government (i.e. from the DfT). This was set out in the Statement of Funds Available (SoFA), which was published in October 2017.

4.1.5 The TRU was listed as a scheme in Stage 3 of the RNEP - Decision to Design, with the stated aim being to deliver improved rail performance, capacity and journey times between Manchester and York.

4.1.6 Projects listed have progressed through to the final development stage and will be either working towards or have completed an Outline Business Case (“OBC”). In April 2020, the TRU was awarded an OBC and provided funding (£3bn) to take TRU programme projects through the design and delivery stages.

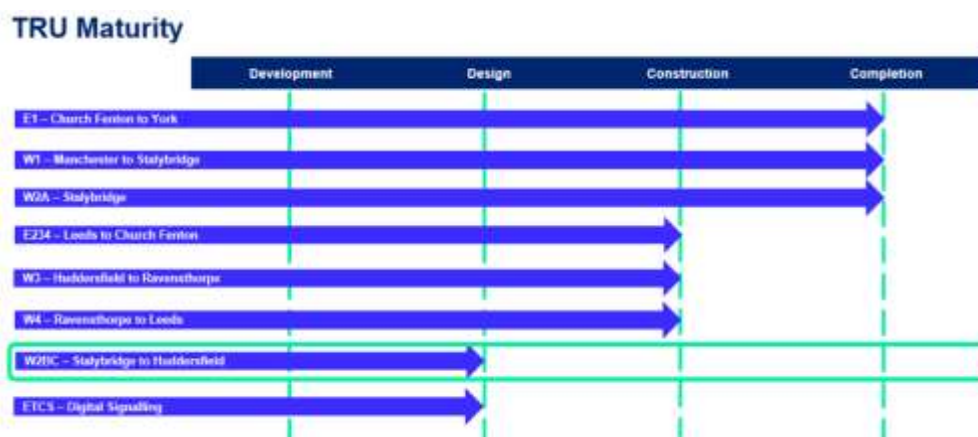
4.1.7 Further funding has been received from DfT and HM Treasury since the OBC award in April 2020 and a number of projects across TRU have progressed into delivery, with works having physically started in January 2021. The Scheme is part of the section of TRU referred to as project W2B/C and secured funding to carry out design and programme protection activities through Programme Business Case 2 in May 2023 (**NR94**).

4.1.8 The projects are shown in Figure 4-1 below and are at varying stages of maturity and delivery.

Figure 4-1: Maturity of the TRU projects (noting W2B/C is at ‘Design’ maturity stage).

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits



4.1.9 The Prime Minister announced in March 2025 a further £415m to the delivery of the TRU programme, taking it to £7.3bn in current total committed funds for TRU.

4.1.10 Project W2BC is a critical part of TRU without which it will not be possible to run the train services and timetable defined for TRU. The timely delivery of Project W2B will be essential to the realisation of the overall TRU benefits, both for passengers and freight services, in the coming decade.

4.1.11 There is a suite of transport and railway policy and guidance documentation of relevance to the Scheme. Each details the importance of the railway in growing the economy and the realisation of the socio-economic benefits that a growing and efficient railway can bring. My proof of evidence deals with the national guidance and rail strategy, with national and local planning policy dealt with in the proof of Mr Gradwell [NR/PoE/MG/15.2].

Policies which I consider to be material to my proof includes:

Rail

- Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) – Department for Transport (2018) + (Autumn 2019 update) (**NR32**)
- Integrated Rail Plan for the North & Midlands (November 2021) (**NR33**)

I also consider the following policies to be relevant to my proof; these are addressed in the Statement of Case (**NR30**)

- Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail – HM Government (2021) (**NR34**)
- Northern Growth Strategy: Case for change (2026) (**NR36**)

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

Transport

- National Infrastructure Strategy – HM Government (2020) **(NR96)**
- Rail Needs Assessment – National Infrastructure Commission (December 2020) **(NR97)**
- Transport Investment Strategy – HM Government (2017) **(NR98)**

Economics and Sustainability

- Build Back Better: our plan for growth – HM Government (2021) (Withdrawn June 25)
- 10 Point Plan for Decarbonisation – HM Government (2020) **(NR99)**

4.1.12 Connecting People: A Strategic Vision for Rail, DfT, November 2017, **(NR100)** sets out the Government's vision for the rail industry as being:

- A more reliable railway;
- An expanded network, forging new links between places to encourage economic growth;
- A better deal for passengers, improving the customer experience;
- A modern workforce with improved skills, training and diversity to deliver a better rail offer; and
- A productive and innovative sector to deliver ambitions of the railway and UK economy.

4.1.13 The Scheme, in combination with the TRU, will help to deliver on all five of the aims above. The Scheme facilitates an increase in capacity of the railway through the provision of modernised signalling which will mean shorter headways between trains, meaning they can run closer together increasing the number of trains that can be on the Scheme Route at any one time, and, improvements at stations. This will also improve the quality of the service for passengers by increasing choice and improving the reliability and resilience of the service. Through an increase in network capacity a service specification allowing additional train paths can be offered to passenger service operators that will enable more passengers to use this sustainable mode of travel, along with the electrification of the line, thereby helping to fulfil rail's environmental potential and further deliver the ambitions for UK economy, and overall, create a far better deal for passengers than exists today.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

4.1.14 Network Rail's duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Section 3 (duty to non-employees to conduct and undertake in such a way as to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable they are not exposed to risks to their health or safety) includes a responsibility for users of level crossings. Network Rail's strategic objectives for meeting its long-term level crossing vision of no accidents at level crossings on Britain's main line network include maximising risk reduction. Closure of level crossings is the most effective way of removing risk from the network.

4.1.15 Network Rail has established a long-term strategy of reducing level crossing risk. Its long term strategy targeting improved safety on Great Britain's railway is set out in its strategy document: "Enhancing Level Crossing Safety 2019-2029, A long term strategy targeting improved safety on Great Britain's railway" (NR77). The policy builds on Network Rail's core safety vision of 'Everyone home safe everyday', which sits behind its long-term safety objective of no accidents at level crossings, and its commitment to improving level crossing safety, doing all that is reasonably practicable to close crossings and improve safety at those which remain open (pg14). A key element of Network Rail's policy on level crossings, to close level crossings where possible, is reflected in the ORR "Principles for managing level crossing safety" published on 15th July 2021 (NR78). The ORR's "Strategy for regulation of health and safety risks – 4: level crossings" (NR79) goes on to stipulate that closure [of level crossings] should be the first consideration in a risk control strategy by the duty holder.

4.1.16 A key element of Network Rail's policy on level crossings, to close level crossings where possible, is reflected in the ORR "Level Crossings; a guide to managers, designers and operators – Railway Safety Publication 7" (NR114). It is widely acknowledged that the closure of level crossings is the most effective way to remove the risk. This is consistent with the General Principles of Prevention, set out in Schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, in particular the following: (a) avoiding risks; (b) combating the risks at source; (f) replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous. More detail on level crossing policy and NR's approach is in Mr Greenwood's proof of evidence [NR/PoE/JG/9.2].

5. THE BUSINESS CASE

5.1 Funding for the Order Scheme

5.1.1 The Scheme is an integral part of the of the TRU programme. The full benefits of TRU cannot be delivered without the Scheme. Therefore, the business case used to establish the cost benefit ratio of the works relates to all projects of TRU and not just the Scheme.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 5.1.2 The funding position in respect of the Order Scheme is detailed in the Funding Statement accompanying the Order application (**NR05**). The project cost as set out in the Funding Statement is £224,922,162. which Network Rail and the Government have provided public commitments to fund, subject to continued ongoing Value for Money (VfM) tests to ensure it remains the right thing to do for the UK taxpayer.
- 5.1.3 The DFT has confirmed the Government's commitment to TRU and the W2B Project works to be authorised by this Order along with allocation of funding subject to ongoing consideration to ensure the Project delivers the best results for both rail users and taxpayers.
- 5.1.4 The Project will be seeking the balance of funds to meet the capital cost of implementing the Order through a Final Business Case submission to the DFT in 2027.

5.2 Strategic Context

- 5.2.1 The Government is committed to levelling-up communities and the availability of opportunities; for multi-faceted public interventions, with investment in infrastructure playing a key part in this agenda, as well as building back better and a faster and greener post COVID-19 recovery. A key pillar of the published National Infrastructure Strategy ("NIS") is levelling-up the whole of the UK" to leave no community or business behind (NIS, Chapter 2) (**NR96**). The NIS signals a step-change of investment in transport infrastructure in the North.
- 5.2.2 The NIS makes clear the Government's commitment to improving connectivity between northern cities to promote growth. Separately, the National Infrastructure Commission ("NIC") has provided a Rail Needs Assessment, which in Annex B on page 78 highlights the priorities for regional links and the importance of East-West links, notably the Manchester-Leeds corridor, the need to address congestion between Leeds and York, and delivery of the TRU. This clearly lends significant strategic weight to upgrading the TRU.
- 5.2.3 The NIS, 2020, states that:
- "A well-designed public-transport network is fundamental to the operation of any city. London is the only city in Europe where you can access more local services by public transport than by car. But the story is different in regional cities, where access to those same services by public transport lags behind continental peers. This is why the government will invest in the North, Midlands and South West to help rebalance the UK economy"*
- 5.2.4 Further government commitment to the role that rail infrastructure and services has to play in the wider economic regeneration of the north is in the numerous

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

published government documents, such as the Strategic Vision for Rail where objectives 1 and 2 of the Vision are to create a ‘more reliable railway’ and an ‘expanded network’, with the then Secretary of State for Transport stating:

‘Our investments will meet demand for more capacity on the network, adding new links, restoring lost capacity and connections, and supporting the Government’s Industrial and Housing Strategies.’

- 5.2.5 The Transport Investment Strategy further supports in paragraph 1.25 stating the government are;

‘committed to transport investment playing its part in building the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine and supporting every part of Britain to reach its potential. Reducing congestion and strengthening connectivity are both crucial for increasing local productivity and creating places in which people want to live and work,’ and goes on to state in paragraph 1.29 that:

‘Targeted investment can help less prosperous regions realise these benefits, unlocking economic potential and supporting a more balanced growth around the country’.

- 5.2.6 TRU, and the Scheme works represent an example of such targeted investment.

- 5.2.7 Adopting the government’s aim and objectives for the rebalancing of the economy and the role that rail investment has to play in the economic future of the country, Transport for the North (TfN) reiterates the importance of rail in their Long-Term Rail Strategy, 2018, with paragraph 2.3 stating;

‘A high-quality railway network will be an enabler of higher productivity and economic growth throughout the North of England, providing a community resource which supports the natural and built environment and ultimately delivers an improved quality of life, allowing places and communities across the North to prosper.’ And para 2.10 adding, ‘Improvements to connectivity will support a sustainable transformation of the North’s economic performance and quality of life. For the rail network, this will require an improvement in train services to provide better connections and increase service frequency while ensuring there is capacity to react to changing requirements’.

- 5.2.8 The Long-Term Rail Strategy specifically identifies the east-west rail corridors as poor performing and an inhibitor to growth. Paragraph 3.49 states that:

‘Improved east-west rail connectivity would support greater agglomeration, productivity and efficiency across the North of England, and enable cities in the North to develop stronger economic links and function more like other major global economic regions’ and also recognises the role that rail

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

franchises can, have played in realising rail benefits, such as investment in new rolling stock, but concludes in 3.53 that ‘the full benefits of this investment cannot be realised without sustained improvements to enable journey time reductions and further frequency increases, particularly on key east-west corridors’

and recognises the importance of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, as a project designed to do just that, with paragraph 3.56 stating that:

‘TRU would help build towards the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme, being developed by TfN and the DfT, working collaboratively with northern Partners.’

5.2.9 The Integrated Rail Plan published November 2021, sets out the Government’s blueprint for investment in rail travel and the development of rail services and infrastructure across the Midlands and the North, providing access to Scotland and London - aiming to bring together communities and strengthen the economy. It sets out how the Government will bring forward the development of Phase 2b of High Speed 2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, other major Network Rail schemes and programmes for the North and Midlands over the period to 2050.

5.2.10 Paragraphs 2.2-2.4 of the Integrated Rail Plan further emphasises the Needs Case for rail improvements, highlighting the need for the levelling-up of the UK economy and the critical role that the rail network has to play in that economic and social goal. The Integrated Rail Plan identifies the rail network as remaining the most effective way of moving large numbers of people into city centres and transporting volumes of goods over long distances.

5.2.11 The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) has four strategic objectives (see paragraph 2.27), these are:

- improving transport for users by enhancing capacity and connectivity to meet long-term rail demand and make journeys faster, easier and more reliable;
- growing and levelling-up the economy by creating opportunities for skills, employment, agglomeration and regeneration;
- reducing environmental impact by supporting decarbonisation of the rail network, and accelerating modal shift for passengers and goods; and
- ensuring value for the taxpayer through efficient delivery of rail infrastructure, learning lessons from past projects to ensure that schemes are delivered effectively.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

5.2.12 A key aim of the IRP is to realise the intended benefits of TRU faster and ensure the delivery of infrastructure is more efficient. The Scheme represents a key building block on the wider works across the North and is a critical piece of infrastructure in unlocking the significant benefits available. Page 100 of the IRP states that the TRU will become NPR Phase 1 and deliver significant benefits as already outlined.

5.2.13 It is clear from both a national and regional context, the investment proposed for TRU, and for the Scheme is fully supported. The Policy framework is considered further in the Statement of Case (Section 6), and further review of local policies can be read in Mr. Gradwell's Proof of Evidence [NR/PoE/TR/15.2].

5.3 Rebalancing the Economy

5.3.1 As is apparent from the IRP and the other documents I have referred to above, the Government shares the NIC's view on the importance of strong regional cities; the vital organs of the UK economy. Cities drive economic growth through agglomeration effects; they encourage specialisation, drive competition and spread ideas and innovation faster than other conurbations. London is one of the most productive cities in the world and many other UK regional cities can also play a similarly important role in the UK economy.

5.3.2 However, the NIC has noted that many of the UK's largest cities have below average productivity (GVA per head) relative to their size and population. Section 3.4.2 and figure 3-2 indicates the GVA per head between key cities in the North and London, and also between cities in selected other countries. In fact, the UK has the widest regional disparity in GVA per head amongst the OECD countries.

5.3.3 The difference in GVA per head between the North and London & the South East has been widening. It was 63% in 2006 but 73% in 2017. In aggregate terms, the Northern economy was 9% bigger than that of London in 1997, but is now 19% smaller (Source of all figures: The Office for National Statistics, Regional economic activity by gross value added (balanced), UK: 1998 to 2017).

5.3.4 Transport has a vital role to play in providing greater connectivity to improve regional productivity and incomes, not to mention better daily life experience for citizens. As well as increasing trade and agglomeration, better transport can also link job-seekers to jobs which, along with complementary investment in skills, can increase employment opportunities and help spread the benefits of a growing economy. Better day-to-day transport which is attractive and provides access to the right jobs can also help prevent the observed out-migration of existing skilled labour to other parts of the country.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 5.3.5 Rail transport has a particular advantage because it can efficiently and sustainably take large numbers of people and freight swiftly right into the heart of major economic centres, effectively increasing the connection between wealth-generating areas, their markets and areas that supply supporting inputs (especially labour) and services. This is the essence of agglomeration. In practical terms, rail can support connectivity and productivity through providing fast, frequent, attractive and reliable services which are efficient in terms of the use of resources such as transport corridors and labour.
- 5.3.6 Investment in the North's key east-west rail artery linking the main cities can therefore make a significant contribution to the Government's strategic levelling up agenda, alongside complementary programmes to promote core local government services, skills and education, employment, regeneration, environmental renewal and attractive places to live and work.

5.4 TRU Business Case Review

- 5.4.1 TRU is expected to incur an initial capital spend of circa £11bn, followed by ongoing operating costs for Network Rail of £241m for maintenance over its lifetime and £86m per annum for the TOC's operating costs. It is estimated that TRU will generate an additional £721m revenue. The economic appraisal sets out the estimated benefits of the TRU Programme, with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.44, representing a low-medium value for money option, in accordance with the DfT's value for money assessment guidance. It still remains though, that for every £1 invested, the TRU programme will return £1.44 to the economy, and contribute to the levelling-up agenda.
- 5.4.2 The TRU programme has been assessed according to the DfT's web-based Transport Analysis Guidance (the accepted standard for software tools and guidance on transport modelling and appraisal methods which are applicable to highways and transport interventions), with demand and trip modelling conducted using the MOIRA2 framework (DfT's forecast tool for the rail network). Inputs to appraisal in terms of journey times and performance have been assessed using the RailSys model and a new "macro" modelling framework developed by Deloitte which captures more accurately the impacts on train performance of digital signalling. Wider economic impacts have been captured using analysis consistent with the Department for Transport's Transport analysis guidance - wider impacts in transport appraisal framework.
- 5.4.3 The Government has consistently positioned the Transpennine Route Upgrade as the foundational first phase and critical enabler of Northern Powerhouse Rail as referenced in the Statement of Case (**NR30**) section 6.2.15. Through the

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

Integrated Rail Plan and subsequent ministerial statements, the Government has made clear that NPR is intended to build upon the infrastructure, capacity and capability being delivered through TRU, with upgrades to the existing Manchester–York corridor providing the electrification, additional passenger and freight capacity and capability and operational resilience upon which future NPR services will rely. This commitment has been reinforced through repeated funding allocations for TRU alongside confirmed investment in NPR development, demonstrating a clear and enduring policy intention that the Transpennine Route Upgrade should lay the groundwork for the delivery of an integrated, higher-capacity east–west rail network across the North of England.

6. BENEFITS OF TRU

In this section, my proof of evidence will set out why investment in the rail network between Stalybridge to Diggle ‘Order Scheme’ is needed to underpin and deliver the wider TRU benefits. I will then break down how the Order Scheme contributes to the TRU programme aims. For further information please also read the Statement of Aims (**NR04**) and Statement of Case (**NR30**).

6.1 Order Scheme Benefits and the contribution to TRU Aims

6.1.1 The benefits that the Order Scheme delivers fulfil the clearly stated policy objectives summarised in section 4. These relate to both the programme wide benefits, and those realised locally on the Order Scheme route, and will contribute to both local and national objectives. The TRU aims are set out below with reference to how the Order Scheme contributes towards them.

6.1.2 An improved journey time for Leeds – Manchester Victoria of 42-44mins;*

(The Order Scheme contributes to this journey time improvement by enabling increased running speeds of up to 80mph achieved through optimised track; signalling systems the installation of Overhead Line Electrification across the full extent of the Order Scheme route and through the closure of the two existing level crossings on the Order Scheme route);

6.1.3 An improved journey time for York to Manchester Victoria of 65-67mins;*

(The Order Scheme contributes to this journey time improvement by enabling increased running speeds of upto 80mph achieved through optimised track; and signalling systems, the installation of Overhead Line Electrification across the full extent of the Order Scheme route and through the closure of the two existing level crossings on the Order Scheme route);

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

*Note: the improved journey times represent the latest Client Development Agreement 4, April 25, TRU programme outputs.

6.1.4 Capability to operate four ‘express’ and two ‘semi-express’ services an hour on the route;

The Order Scheme, contributes to this capability improvement through optimised track installations and new signalling equipment, allowing trains to run at higher line speeds and more frequently. Through an increase in network capacity a service specification allowing additional train paths can be offered to passenger service operators. It also delivers on this capacity improvement aim by improving the (platform lengths) at Mossley and Greenfield Station;

6.1.5 Capability to operate up to two ‘local services’ an hour on the route;

The Order Scheme contributes to this capability improvement through optimised track installations and new signalling equipment, allowing trains to run at higher line speeds and more frequently. Through an increase in network capacity a service specification allowing additional train paths can be offered to passenger service operators.

6.1.6 Performance of the Transpennine Route to be 92.5% (PPM) or higher each period.

The Order Scheme, contributes to this intended outcome through the wholesale renewal and enhancement of rail infrastructure assets within the Order footprint including track, drainage and signalling. The Order scheme will see a new station built at Mossley Station and a remodelled station at Greenfield, enabling efficient dispatch of services (longer platforms minimise crowding and wider platforms to allow wheelchair users quicker access on/off the train). The closure of 2 level crossings at Stockport Road and Moorgate Halt, as part of the Order scheme will reduce the number of pedestrian/train incidents and mitigate reduced performance and disruption to passengers.

6.1.7 Freight paths/rights to be retained as existing with larger freight containerisation capability (W12 gauge).

Maintaining freight capacity with improved capability will incentivise a modal shift with fewer heavy vehicles on the highway network causing traffic issues and contributing to air pollution. The Order Scheme will deliver infrastructure improvements needed to run a higher volume mixed traffic railway and will see the reconstruction and modification of existing bridges and tunnels to facilitate the electrification of the railway and the ability to operate larger freight containerisation on the railway. An optimised railway means more freight trains

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

will be able to operate which in turns brings about economic and environmental benefits.

6.1.8 A contribution to Network Rail's Decarbonisation Strategy and climate policy.

The Order Scheme will deliver a fully electrified section of the Transpennine route, with train fleet changes being made to allow electric trains to make use of the benefits of an electrified route. A cleaner railway aligns with Network Rail's Decarbonisation Strategy that seeks electrification of routes, and areas, where appropriate.

6.1.9 As discussed in section 3.2, there are a number of constraints on growth in terms of capacity and line speed and, together with historical performance issues encountered in this location, mean that the Order Scheme is an important part to the success of TRU and the governments levelling-up ambition.

6.2 Order Scheme Benefits

6.2.1 The benefits of the Order Scheme are detailed below.

6.2.2 **Passenger Experience:** The Order Scheme will provide enhanced accessibility, and compliant station at a new relocated Mossley Station, which, will include new modern passenger facilities, step-free access, longer and wider platforms, improved drop-off arrangements, the availability of additional blue badge and non-blue badge parking. Stations within the Order Scheme limits currently do not have step free access capability. Relocating Mossley Station has linked benefits to the wider TRU scheme allowing the track position to be optimised for the proposed higher line speeds and the ability to introduce an earthed section of the overhead line equipment, adjacent to Mossley Cottages as an additional level of risk control.

6.2.3 **Electrification and freight:** A number of existing bridge structures that cross the Scheme Route will be replaced as part of the Order Scheme to enable the clearances required for the installation of railway electrification works (including the provision of OLE). In addition, the replacement of these bridge structures will improve clearances on the Scheme Route to enable the capability to run larger freight containerisation on the Scheme Route. Electrification will allow train fleet changes so that electric trains to make use of the benefits of an electrified route. This accords with Network Rail's Decarbonisation Strategy. TRU was identified specifically in the Decarbonisation Strategy and so electrification of the Order Scheme route supports that aim. Electrification also

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

assists with journey time and performance whereby electric trains accelerate faster, and brake more efficiently.

- 6.2.4 **Level Crossing Safety:** The Order Scheme will deliver a safe way of passage across the Scheme Route for existing users of the two level crossings located on the Scheme Route through the provision of alternative safe routes across the railway. This will remove key conflicts between trains and the public and provide 24/7 access across the railway. Closing the two level crossings will, by reducing these key conflicts between trains and the public, also provide for improved capacity on the Scheme Route, by allowing an increase in line speed enabling faster journeys for passengers.
- 6.2.5 Closure of the two level crossings delivers clear and demonstrable benefits for railway performance and reliability, as well as safety, already noted. Level crossings introduce inherent operational constraints and points of failure into the railway, requiring trains to operate with additional controls, constraints on speed and increasing susceptibility to disruption arising from misuse or incident response. The removal of the two level crossings simplifies the operational railway within the Order Scheme, reduces the likelihood of unplanned service interruptions, and enables more resilient timetabling by eliminating reactionary delays, speed restrictions and recovery time associated with crossing events. In doing so, closure of the two level crossings supports improved punctuality, enhanced service robustness and greater network capacity, particularly on busy mixed-traffic routes which the Order Scheme is seeking to further intensify. Mr Greenwood expands on the consequential risk to operational efficiency in sections 3.19 to 3.38 of his evidence [NR/PoE/JG/9.2].
- 6.2.6 **More trains:** The Order Scheme will facilitate the provision of modernised signalling on the Scheme Route which will mean shorter headways between trains, meaning they can run closer together through more effective digital controls in place, and this in turn will allow for increased capacity in the number of trains that can be on the Scheme Route at any one time.
- 6.2.7 **Faster trains:** Currently the route has various speed limits. The Order Scheme will allow for faster line speeds (upto 80mph in the Order Scheme footprint). This will improve journey times and will increase the flexibility to timetable more train paths on the wider Transpennine route.
- 6.2.8 **Decarbonisation of the economy:** The improved efficiency and capacity delivered by the Order Scheme will incentivise a modal shift with fewer heavy vehicles on the highway network causing traffic issues and contributing to air pollution. An effective railway means larger freight containerisation will be able to operate which in turns brings about economic and environmental benefits.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 6.2.9 Improved connectivity:** The Order Scheme will address the current capacity and performance issues experienced, noting the Order route and wider Transpennine route has suffered from a lack of strategic investment in the past. Improved connectivity will support wider regional development within and between the cities of the North.
- 6.2.10 Economic benefits:** The implementation of the Order Scheme will bring significant socio-economic benefits across the local, sub-regional and regional level in terms of business activity and employment. The improvements will have a beneficial effect overall on access to local businesses in the Order Scheme area and the local economy in terms of encouraging new business and housing development opportunities and jobs that could be generated indirectly by the Order Scheme. This will be directly enhanced with TRU employment targets within the 25 mile and 40 mile radius through apprenticeships, and local procurement of goods/services/construction labour employment opportunities.
- 6.2.11 Reduced operating and maintenance costs:** New infrastructure equipment delivered by the Order Scheme will reduce maintenance costs compared to the existing railway, with associated benefits for taxpayers, the travelling public, freight operators and freight end-users. The closure of the Level crossings will reduce the need for future inspection and maintenance, with a corresponding reduction in the associated operational costs.

7. EARLY SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Current State

- 7.1.1** As I have set out in section 5, the Transpennine Route is the key East-West artery across the Northern economy, forming the most direct existing rail link between Manchester and Leeds, but also used as a “spine” to link a wider set of economic centres such as Newcastle and Hull in the East, and Liverpool in the West. As well as linking city centres, the line also joins these centres to actual and potential commuting areas and key sites such as Manchester Airport, and university and research centres at numerous sites across the North. The route also supports freight flows across the North as one of the most direct East-West corridors. It complements the M62 as the other key modal choice for crossing the Pennines between urban West Yorkshire and Manchester. Both crossings are heavily in demand.
- 7.1.2** The Transpennine Route has a comparative advantage in providing links into city centres but unfortunately, the Transpennine Route is not currently well-placed to deliver its key enabling role in connecting the Northern conurbations. This presents a missed opportunity in terms of levelling up economic growth and a more sustainable balance between road and rail use, but it also

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

presents more immediate problems on a day to-day basis, as the Transpennine Route is at capacity and performs poorly.

7.2 Strategic Alternatives

- 7.2.1 As I have highlighted at sections 5 & 6 above, there is a clear need to address capacity issues on the key East to West arterial routes, serving specific conurbations across the North. The remit of TRU is to address the performance issues related to the existing service, increase the capacity on the Transpennine Route and to decrease journey times. There are no high level strategic alternatives that would deliver these benefits without investing directly in the infrastructure.
- 7.2.2 As mentioned, the M62 cross-Pennine motorway is the only other major piece of infrastructure, but that too has only recently undergone a full modernisation and capacity increase scheme and is already at capacity and other Transpennine road schemes, away from the M62 such as the Transpennine Tunnel, would not be of sufficient scale to provide a feasible alternative to rail travel or deliverable in the coming years.
- 7.2.3 Other rail schemes that have been reviewed include the South Transpennine Route (“STPR”) that links Manchester and Sheffield. However, the STPR does not link into key centres such as Leeds, York, Hull or stations north to Scotland. Instead STPR links to the Midland Mainline and southern destinations. As such, enhancements to the STPR were discounted. It should be noted that the STPR is subject to separate proposed significant capacity and improvement works such as the Hope Valley Line capacity enhancement scheme as authorised by a TWAO in 2018 and which entered into service in 2024.
- 7.2.4 Works are happening on other routes close to the Transpennine Route, such as the Calder Valley line, but these are works to upgrade them sufficiently so that they can be used as diversionary routes whilst the TRU programme is constructed. Work on them in isolation would not deliver the benefits that the TRU programme is remitted to deliver.
- 7.2.5 During the development phases of TRU, strategic alternatives were considered that could deliver the TRU aims. The main strategic alternatives considered were partial electrification and full electrification of the TRU route. It was concluded that partial electrification would not meet the aims of TRU and a full electrification scheme was chosen as the preferred scheme. This decision is confirmed in government policy set out in the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (November 2021).

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 7.2.6 Following consideration of the range of reasonable strategic alternatives, it was concluded that no other option was capable of delivering the scale of capacity, performance, environmental and economic benefits required, while remaining affordable and deliverable within the necessary timescales. Accordingly, enhancement of the existing Transpennine Route through the Transpennine Route Upgrade was identified as the sole feasible strategic response to the identified need, and consistent with national rail policy and funding constraints.

7.3 Future Rail Schemes

- 7.3.1 The Scheme and the TRU programme of works are the first major rail infrastructure projects in the North of England in the last twenty years (since the West Coast Mainline upgrade). Both are being delivered by Network Rail, within the funding and governance mechanisms already set out, with necessary funding approved to date. Future rail investment in the North of England is being delivered as a coordinated programme rather than a series of isolated projects. The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is modernising the existing York–Leeds–Manchester corridor through electrification, capacity enhancements and resilience improvements, and has been explicitly designed to form the first phase of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). This approach ensures that infrastructure delivered today can be directly used and built upon by future NPR schemes. NPR will then layer additional capacity, faster journey times and new infrastructure onto this upgraded network to transform east–west connectivity between the North’s major cities. Together with interfaces to HS2, these schemes are being planned as a single, integrated rail system that progressively improves performance, supports economic growth, and enables a more reliable, greener and higher-capacity railway for passengers and freight across the North.
- 7.3.2 The Northern Growth Strategy: Case for change (2026) (**NR36**) identifies poor east–west connectivity between the North of England’s major cities as a fundamental constraint on productivity, labour mobility and long-term economic growth, and positions Northern Powerhouse Rail as the central intervention to address this challenge. The strategy argues that the North’s economic potential cannot be fully realised while journey times, service frequency and capacity between city regions remain significantly weaker than in the South, limiting access to jobs, skills and markets. In response, NPR is presented as the backbone of the strategy’s transport-led growth agenda, providing faster, more

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

reliable and higher-capacity rail connections between cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and York. By building on upgrades already underway through the Transpennine Route Upgrade and integrating with wider national networks, NPR is intended to enable agglomeration benefits, support housing and regeneration, and help the North function as a more productive, connected economic system - thereby delivering both regional and national growth objectives set out in the Northern Growth Strategy.

7.4 Non-infrastructure alternatives

- 7.4.1 The rail industry has been responding to the challenges on the Transpennine Route referred to above, through a range of initiatives, especially to reduce crowding and improve passenger experience. On the Transpennine Route specifically, TPE has invested heavily in new rolling stock, as well as providing an enhanced passenger environment and the ability for some “bi-mode” stock to use electric traction where available (beyond Manchester and York), the key benefit of this investment is a significant increase in seating capacity, with the typical train lengthened from 3 to 5 cars, and those cars having a higher seating density.
- 7.4.2 The introduction of new rolling stock and an improved timetable in December 2019 have increased the nominal seats per hour across the Pennines on fast trains from 900 to circa 1600, an improvement of 80%. These improvements are a positive step towards relieving recent overcrowding on the route, at least for the faster trains. However, challenges remain around performance, reliability, and capacity for both local and express services, which can only be resolved through infrastructure investment.

7.5 Scheme alternatives

- 7.5.1 Once the need for the Scheme was established, a list of alternative options and sub-options were considered and assessed in advance of progressing with the Order application. The option selection process is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 7 of the Statement of Case (**NR30**) with detail behind each option included, along with more detail in the proofs of Ms Emma Clarke [NR/PoE/EC/2.2], Mr Laurie Barbour [NR/PoE/LB/13.2] and Mr Lee Barraclough [NR/PoE/LB/11.2].
- 7.5.2 As a brief introduction to NR’s option selection process, I set out below the The Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment (PACE) Framework that NR follow for all railway projects. PACE is Network Rail’s management and control process for delivering projects on the operational railway and is mandatory for all significant rail projects. This is the process that the TRU Programme has

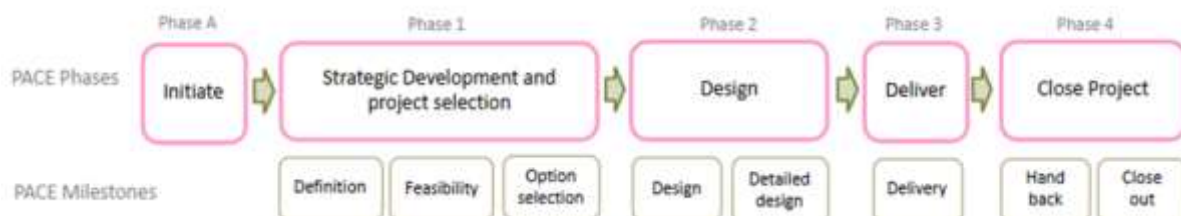
The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

followed during the development of the various TRU projects, including the Order scheme.

- 7.5.3 PACE divides a project into five distinct phases (Figure 7-1) which are further broken down into Milestone or Engineering Stages. The overall approach in PACE is product rather than process driven, and within the Engineering Stage a set of products are delivered. The phases and milestones are broken down as per below.

Figure 7-1 PACE phase –gate process



- 7.5.4 The Order Scheme has completed its Phase 1, along with Engineering Stage 3 ‘Option Selection’ (previously known as GRIP 3). The project is currently in Phase 2 Design Engineering Stage ‘single option design phase’, which is being undertaken in parallel with the Order process.

- 7.5.5 At all stages through PACE it is important to ensure that the outputs are still aligned to the programmes outlined benefits whilst delivering best value for money and that the spend is still in the public interest.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1.1 Network Rail has consulted widely on the Order Scheme with stakeholders (statutory and landowner)¹ and the public (including ward councillors and access groups) from August 2024 to December 2024. The purpose of consultation has been to ensure statutory bodies, landowners, members of the public and other stakeholders had an opportunity to understand and comment on the Order Scheme and potential environmental effects.

- 8.1.2 Prior to starting public consultation in August 2024, Network Rail shared its proposed Approach to Community Consultation (AtCC) with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (TMBC) and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) for comment.

¹Stakeholder (statutory) consultation includes engagement with the organisations listed in column (2) of the table in Schedule 5, and column (2) of the table in Schedule 6 of the Application Rules.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

The approach summarised the engagement to date and how Network Rail proposed to consult with communities affected by the Order Scheme and lineside neighbours. Neither TMBC nor OMBC provided feedback to the AtCC and Network Rail consulted in accordance with the AtCC.

- 8.1.3 Stakeholder (statutory and landowner) consultation took a two-phase approach. The number of phases was guided by the number of design iterations required for Order Scheme elements, as well as the addition of new Order Scheme elements. The first phase focused on the majority of the Order Scheme elements and the second phase covered the closure of Moorgate Halt Level Crossing which was later added into the Order Scheme.
- 8.1.4 Public consultation on the proposals for the Order Scheme took a two-phase approach. The first phase focussed on the majority of the Order Scheme elements and the second phase covered the closure of Moorgate Level Crossing which was later added into the Order Scheme.
- 8.1.5 A summary of the consultation phases is set out in the Consultation Report (**NR07**), which sets out in detail who was consulted, on what issues, during each of the phases of the consultation. A summary of the public and stakeholder (statutory and landowner) consultation phases including focused engagement and information events, are set out in Table 8-1 below.

Table 8-1. Summary of the public and stakeholder (statutory and landowner) consultation and focused engagement/information events.

Date	Consultation activity
August – October 2024	Phase 1 stakeholder consultation (landowners)
September – October 2024	Phase 1 stakeholder consultation (statutory)
September – October 2024	Phase 1 public consultation
November – December 2024	Phase 2 stakeholder consultation (statutory) – Moorgate Halt level crossing
November – December 2024	Phase 2 public consultation – Moorgate Halt level crossing
18 June 2025	Phase 3 focused engagement – Mossley cottages owners/occupiers
9 & 10 July 2025	Phase 4 Information events
July & August 2025	Phase 5 focused engagement – Manchester Road residents
September & October 2025	Phase 6 focused engagement – Manchester Road residents

- 8.1.6 In addition to the two phases of consultation, focused engagement and information events were held. These provided an opportunity for members of

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

the public, including those with a potential interest in land, to be informed about the scope and details of the design which is included in the Order. Attendees were able to view the proposed designs and engage with the project team about the proposals.

- 8.1.7 Consultation has been important in helping identify potential issues at an early stage of the Order Scheme's development. It has enabled Network Rail to collate as much feedback as possible as the design of the Order Scheme has progressed. Comments from both stakeholders (statutory and landowner) and the public have been considered and have informed the iterative design process.

8.2 Publicising the consultation

- 8.2.1 Consultation was ongoing with all consultees throughout the consultation period with meetings, phone calls, emails, presentations and site visits.

- 8.2.2 The public events were promoted using several methods, which are detailed below.

8.3 Public Consultation – Phase 1

- 8.3.1 An A5 double-sided flyer was sent to 8,624 households. A 300m radius was used to identify households around each piece of work highlighted in the public consultation and a radius 1km was used around Mossley and Greenfield stations.

- 8.3.2 A0 posters were displayed at: Greenfield Station and Mossley Station.

- 8.3.3 Digital posters were displayed on TPE services, geo-located to appear as services passed between Standedge Tunnel and Stalybridge. A digital poster was also on display at Stalybridge station;

- 8.3.4 Various tweets about the public consultation were posted from the @thetrupgrade account. A sponsored tweet featuring a bespoke video by Jonathan Reynolds MP was also shared;

- 8.3.5 A media campaign promoting the public consultation was featured in local newspapers: Manchester Evening News, Tameside Reporter, Saddleworth Independent, Oldham Times; on Oldham Community Radio; in trade titles: Rail UK, New Civil Engineer, Business Live, Place North West, Rail Technology Magazine, RAIL Mag.

- 8.3.6 Information on the Order Scheme and the public consultation information was made available on the Network Rail website.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

8.3.7 Promotional materials also stated that information on the public consultation could be received by calling Network Rail's 24-hour helpline for those unable to access the events or online resources.

8.4 Public Consultation – Phase 2 – Moorgate Halt Level Crossing

8.4.1 A press release was published, and various local news outlets promoted the public consultation through online and print media.

8.4.2 A letter inviting local residents to the in-person consultation and providing information of the online consultation was posted to all homes and businesses withing a 1km radius of Moorgate Halt level crossing.

8.4.3 A social media campaign was led through the Transpennine Route Upgrade social media platforms.

8.4.4 Promotional materials also stated that information on the public consultation could be received by calling Network Rail's 24-hour helpline for those unable to access the events or online resources.

8.5 Focused Engagement – Phase 3 – Mossley Cottages

8.5.1 On the 18 June 2025, focused engagement took place with the owners and occupiers of Mossley cottages.

8.5.2 This event was held specifically for residents and property owners of Mossley Cottages, in recognition of the direct impact the Order Scheme may have on their homes. The session was designed to provide information on the aspects of the Order Scheme most relevant to the cottages. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.

8.6 Public Information event – Phase 4

8.6.1 On the 9th and 10th July 2025, public information events took place at two locations where locals were invited to the venues where they were informed about the scope and details of the TRU proposals.

8.7 Focused Engagement – Phase 5 – Manchester Road Residents

8.7.1 From the 29 July 2025 to the 15 August 2025, focused engagement took place with Manchester Road residents.

8.7.2 Letters were distributed to households located at 219–307 Manchester Road, inviting residents to book one-to-one appointments with Order Scheme representatives. These sessions were offered either in-person or via Microsoft Teams and were available between 12:00 and 19:00 across a three-week

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

period. Alongside the letter, a FAQ document was provided to offer residents additional context about the Order Scheme.

8.8 Focused Engagement – Phase 6 – Manchester Road Residents

8.8.1 Between September 2025 and October 2025, further focused engagement took place with residents of Manchester Road.

8.8.2 Letters were sent out to households located on 219-307 Manchester Road, inviting them to book one-to-one sessions with Order Scheme representatives. These sessions were offered to provide further clarity on any outstanding questions and also provide an opportunity to explain the TWAO process ahead of submitting 'the Order'.

8.9 Ongoing Engagement

8.9.1 Dialogue with affected and interested parties has continued since consultation closed and following submission of the Order application. Mr Nigel Billingsley provides detail on the discussions Network Rail has had with affected landowners and stakeholders in his proof of evidence [NR/PoE/NB/8.2] but I am confident we have had a high level of consultation and engagement for the Scheme.

8.9.2 An example where consultation has directly influenced designs include the proposed relocation of Mossley Station which could have resulted in rail passengers parking on the public highway preventing residents from parking outside their property. Network Rail has engaged on highway matters with the local authority on a regular basis and residents on Manchester Road. As a result of the possible loss of parking on the public highway (Manchester Road), the local authority will be consulting with residents on Manchester Road about a residential parking zone if the Order is made.

8.9.3 Another example was raised whereby if people were walking from Uppermill to Greenfield Station they would attempt to cross Shaw Hall Bank Road at the mouth of the junction with Oldham Road. As a result of the feedback, Network Rail updated the design proposals to include provision of a formal pedestrian crossing point.

8.9.4 With regard to consultation, a considerable amount of work has been done and effort made, to take comments on board and feed them into the design of the Scheme, such that I am satisfied that consultation and engagement has been successful and in line with current best practice. I personally have been engaging with external stakeholders since the public launch of the project in August 2024, and it has been an ongoing process, with defined periods of consultation as outlined above, but also an iterative process where valuable

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

conversations have taken place throughout the project's pre-application process. I have had meetings with affected landowners, stakeholders, and organisations, and continue to do so.

- 8.9.5 A significant number of concerns and issues have been addressed both pre submission of the Order, and also in the period up to the publication of Proofs of Evidence. It is a testament to the level of engagement that has occurred, and continues to happen. I am fully committed to working with all parties to allay concerns and work through issues, to further reduce those objections, both up to, and beyond the Public Inquiry. NR is an organisation that takes pride in its treatment of 'lineside neighbours' and is judged on its performance by government. Where practical and reasonable to do so, NR aims to address all concerns.
- 8.9.6 A small number of objections claim that adequate consultation has not been carried out, and thus the submission is not in accordance with the Rules set out. Given the level of engagement the project has had, both through the formal consultation process as set out in this section, and the ongoing liaison that has been had with all landowners and stakeholders, and evidenced in Mr Billingsley's Proof of Evidence [NR/PoE/NB/8.2], I am satisfied that consultation and engagement has been in line with the Rules.

9. OBJECTIONS REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

- 9.1 After the Order application was made to the Secretary of State for Transport on 7th November 2025, the Secretary of State invited objections, representations and letters of support, in accordance with the 2006 Rules, to be sent to the Secretary of State by 19 December 2025. During that objection period 256 objections, 14 representations and 27 letters of support were received. No objections, representations or letters of support were made in relation to the requests for the open space certificates.
- 9.2 Network Rail has contacted all objectors and, where relevant, has offered to meet with them either in person or virtually. Network Rail has also responded to all letters of objection to address the concerns raised.
- 9.3 Where the Order seeks compulsory powers to take temporary possession of land, or to permanently acquire interests in land, Network Rail's objective is to continue engagement with the affected landowner and to reach terms acceptable to that individual, which address the concerns raised in the letter of objection.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

10. RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

10.1 OBJ/12, 27, 36, 57, 66, 75, 111, 145, 166, 172, 180, 182, 213, 217, 237. – Mossley Station relocation

10.1.1 A number of objections have been received relating to the proposed relocation of Mossley Station and the possible impacts of the relocation on the highway, visual amenity, noise & light pollution. In my proof I will examine the rationale informing the projects decision to propose relocating the station.

10.1.2 Network Rail has carried out a comprehensive optioneering process for Mossley Station in conjunction with the optioneering process for Mossley Cottages, which has resulted in minimal works to Mossley Cottages whilst being able to electrify the railway line, whilst preserving the safety of the occupiers of Mossley Cottages. The TRU project required for including electrification, increased platform lengths and step free access which cannot be provided at the existing Mossley Station due to significant spatial constraints imposed by the existing Stamford Road bridge and engineering challenges due to the local geology (the station is located within a rock cutting).

10.1.3 As part of the design development for the relocated station, Network Rail has engaged with the local authority and has taken into consideration the feedback from the Council, which has in some cases influenced the design. For further information, please refer to (**NR07**) Consultation Report. The relocated Mossley Station has been designed in accordance with Network Rail's Access for All policy, ensuring step-free access to the new station and between station platforms. The relocated station will provide a single span footbridge with lift shafts to connect the two platforms with step-free access, 150-metre-long platforms with secondary escape route, and a new station building. Additionally, there will be a new access from Manchester Road, with new car parking areas, a new bus stop on Manchester Road and a new pedestrian access route from the existing Mossley Station car park. The works at the relocated Mossley Station will enhance the accessibility of the station by a range of modes of transport and enable includes access to the railway, whilst preserving road safety and minimising impacts upon the residential amenity.

10.1.4 I am confident that we have the optimal design solution, and it is certainly an appropriate use of public funds to allow for the project requirements to be met and passenger benefits realised.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

10.2 OBJ/12, 43, 44, 65, 66, 87, 89, 117, 127, 133, 139, 142, 145, 150, 205, 206, 225, 234, 238, 242 – inadequate consultation

10.2.1 A number of objectors have claimed that there has been inadequate consultation and engagement during the TWA process.

10.2.2 Network Rail carried out a series of consultation and focused engagement events, as well as an information event with residents before the Order application was submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport. All feedback from the consultation events was considered, and where feasible, the feedback influenced the design. For further information, please refer to NR07 Consultation Report which summarises the consultation process undertaken by Network Rail during the scheme development in preparation for the submission of the Order application. Also, refer to section 13: Consultation and Engagement within Statement of Case (**NR30**).

10.2.3 As highlighted in section 8 of my proof of evidence, I am satisfied with the consultation NR undertook for the Scheme. Mr Billingsley will comment on landowner specifics in his proof [NR/PoE/NB/8.2], but I am happy that all landowners impacted, either temporarily, or permanently, were, and continue to be, involved at the appropriate points in the TWA process.

10.3 OBJ 43, 44, 87, 144, 146, 205, 233 – future service patterns

10.3.1 A number of objections have been submitted requesting confirmation on the future service patterns at local stations citing the service patterns should be at least two trains per hour.

10.3.2 Current service patterns at local stations such as Mossley and Greenfield are based on 2 trains per hour during peak times (i.e morning and evening commutes), and 1 train per hour during off-peak times.

10.3.2 TRU has undertaken modelling to demonstrate achievement of the capability required (and to be funded) of upto 2 trains per hour. There are a number of different service specifications, and timetables (which include options for calling at intermediate stations) which the ‘service specifier’ may choose to operate – depending on demand at the time, readiness of new rolling stock, freight growth and wider network constraints amongst other considerations.

10.3.3 The modelling continues to test scenarios and performance impacts to support the business case for investment. The outputs of the modelling continue to demonstrate compliance to TRU’s journey time reduction between Manchester and Leeds and confirm suitability of the infrastructure to deliver the various service scenarios. The modelling has indicated to date, generally a significant improvement to ‘average minutes lateness’ when compared to

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

today's infrastructure depending on which service choice is selected, however as designs progress and service options narrowed, this position will be confirmed.

10.4 OBJ 233 – Request for a new Station at Diggle

10.4.1 An objection to the scheme has been received requesting that a new station at Diggle should be considered as part of the scheme upgrade.

10.4.2 The current Transpennine Route Upgrade proposals between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) are focused on upgrading the existing railway infrastructure and existing stations in the corridor. This includes relocating Mossley Station and upgrading Greenfield Station, along with bridge, tunnel and highway works and installing overhead line equipment to support electrification.

10.4.3 There is no current or planned proposal within TRU to build a new station at Diggle, noting there is no station at Diggle currently. New stations are typically progressed through a separate development process - requiring a dedicated business case (including demand, operational impacts such as additional stops, affordability and whole-life costs), an identified funding route, and formal public consultation.

10.4.4 If local stakeholders wish to explore a Diggle station idea in the future, the appropriate route would be through the relevant transport/local authorities and rail fund programmes rather than the current TRU scope.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 In my view, there is a clear and overwhelming needs case for the Order Scheme and it will deliver transformational benefits to the railway users across the North of England, enhancing a key east - west artery, better connecting the North of England with the rest of the UK.

11.2 The Order Scheme is important to unlocking the wider benefits of the TRU programme, increasing train capacity, performance, general capacity on the Transpennine route and other connecting routes and assisting in the Government's levelling-up agenda. In addition, the Scheme provides a positive return for every £1 invested in the project. I feel my proof of evidence provides the compelling needs case to approve the Order application.

11.3 The outputs the Order Scheme secure its status as a must do scheme which the Transpennine Route Upgrade needs to deliver in order to realise the wider TRU benefits.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026
[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

- 11.4 I believe the scheme submission has complied fully with all relevant statutory and procedural requirements. The Scheme has been developed and submitted in accordance with the applicable legislation, including the statutory pre-application, consultation and notification processes, and all required documents and notices have been prepared, publicised and made available in the prescribed manner.
- 11.5 I am satisfied throughout the development of the Scheme, sufficient information has been provided to affected parties and stakeholders to enable them to understand the nature of the proposals, the land and rights affected, and the likely effects of the Scheme. This includes the provision of detailed plans, environmental information and explanatory material, which have been made publicly available and subject to consultation. On this basis, interested parties have been afforded a proper opportunity to engage with the Scheme, make representations, and participate meaningfully in the statutory process.
- 11.6 I recognise that the Order will override private rights and will give rise to limited environmental harm, including harm to the historic environment. In my view, however, the matters which I have addressed in my Proof of Evidence and matters addressed in other Proofs of Evidence provide a compelling case in the public interest which demonstrably outweighs those harms.
- 11.7 I urge the inspector to consider this together with the balance of criteria and consultation with which Network Rail has made.
- 11.8 In conclusion, my evidence demonstrates that the Order Scheme is the only scheme that can deliver the necessary passenger and freight benefits within the required timescales, and do so in a manner that represents an affordable and proportionate solution.

12. WITNESS DECLARATION

12.1 Statement of declaration

- 12.1.1 This Proof of Evidence includes all facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions which I have expressed and the Inquiry's attention has been drawn to any matter which would affect the validity of that opinion.
- 12.1.2 I believe the facts which I have stated in this Proof of Evidence are true and that the opinions expressed are correct, and, I understand my duty to the Inquiry to help it with matters within my expertise and I believe I have complied with that duty.

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026

[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits



Mark Ashton

12th May 2026

The Network Rail (Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements) Order 12th May 2026

[NR/PoE/MA/1.2]

Proof of Evidence – Needs Case and Project Benefits

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