Press release

Northern Powerhouse Rail to drive biggest travel upgrade in the North in a generation

Government announces the biggest transformation to travel in the North in a generation as the Chancellor sets out new Northern Growth Strategy and promises the renewal of Britain to make all parts of the country better off.

From: **HM Treasury (/government/organisations/hm-treasury)**, **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-local-government)**, **The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP (/government/people/steve-reed)**, **The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP (/government/people/heidi-alexander)**, **The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP (/government/people/keir-starmer)** and **The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP (/government/people/rachel-reeves)**

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- Landmark investment in the North will see working people in Northern cities and towns benefit from faster rail links, shorter commutes, better jobs and new homes under new growth plan.
- The landmark Northern Powerhouse Rail at the heart of the plans will reverse years of underinvestment and deliver long-awaited faster and more frequent rail across the North, better connecting Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, York, with improved services to Newcastle and Hull.

People across the North of England will benefit from faster commutes, better jobs, more homes and increased investment in their communities as the government launches a major growth plan for the North - with Northern Powerhouse Rail at its heart.

Set to be the biggest transformation to travel in the North in a generation, the Chancellor will set out how her promise to drive economic growth through stability, investment and reform will reverse years of chronic underinvestment at the hands of the previous government.

This underinvestment was an economic dereliction of duty, with communities across the region repeatedly sold false promises of growth and better connectivity, and many people choosing to leave their hometowns to find jobs, security and opportunity elsewhere as a result.

This government is righting that wrong with the Chancellor having already taken the necessary decisions to put a record £120 billion for capital investment into long-awaited infrastructure
projects this Parliament including road, rail and green energy that will generate the jobs of the future and turbocharge growth.

The new growth drive will strengthen connections between some of the fastest growing city regions in the country – connecting Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Warrington, York and improved services to Newcastle and Hull – to drive productivity and create tens of thousands of jobs.

By way of illustration, up to £40 billion a year could be injected into the British economy if productivity in the North was lifted just to the national average – but of course that is not the limit to government's ambition.

Northern Powerhouse Rail – the backbone of the plan - will see a major new rail service across the North that is faster and more frequent, transforming commutes for Liverpool, Manchester, Warrington, Leeds,
Bradford, Sheffield and York, with services running onto Newcastle and Hull. From boosted connectivity between these fast-growing city regions will

come more jobs, new homes and a greater number of opportunities for businesses to invest and expand.

Connectivity in the North lags behind the South. Where a Paddington to Reading rail journey of 35 miles takes just 22 minutes, a rail journey between Liverpool and Manchester Airport of just 29 miles can take 1 hour and 25 minutes, stopping 21 times. This landmark upgrade to travel will reduce journey times like these in the North.

This is the latest action being taken by the government to deliver economic growth in parts of the country previously overlooked. This landmark upgrade to rail travel is one of the central building blocks of a northern growth corridor from Liverpool to York – which has the potential to rival some of the most successful growth corridors in Europe, like the Rhine-Ruhr region in Germany and the Randstad in the Netherlands – and follows immediate action to ease the cost of living for people by freezing rail fares for the first time in 30 years and maintaining the £3 cap on bus fares.

Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, said:

> "I spent three happy years in Leeds as a university student, a vibrant city I was proud to call home. But I've seen first hand what underinvestment and empty pledges do to cities across the North.
>
> "A reliable commute, a secure job, a thriving town centre - these are all things that everyone should expect. But over and over again people in Northern communities, from Liverpool and Manchester to York and Newcastle have been let down by broken promises.
>
> "This cycle has to end. No more paying lip service to the potential of the North, but backing it to the hilt.
>
> "That's why this government is rolling up its sleeves to deliver real, lasting change for millions of people through Northern Powerhouse Rail: a major new rail network across the North that will deliver faster, more frequent services.
>
> "This investment is proof we're putting our money where our mouth is, working with local leaders to deliver the transport links that will help working people do what they need to in life – getting to work, taking the kids to school, or days out with the family."

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said:

> "If economic growth is the challenge, investment and renewal is the solution. That's why we're reversing years of chronic underinvestment in the North.

> “Our transformative plans will create jobs, build homes and unlock opportunities for businesses to invest. That’s how we deliver economic growth, a renewed Britain and more money in working people’s pockets.”

After more than a decade of dither and delay from previous governments, the Chancellor has backed Northern Powerhouse Rail with £1.1 billion over the Spending Review period, allowing progress on planning, development, and design work to be made which will unlock benefits for the people of the North from the 2030s. NPR will build on the Transpennine Upgrade scheme, which is proceeding on time and on budget.

The first phase of the programme will deliver improved connections between Sheffield and Leeds, Leeds and York, and Leeds and Bradford. In the North East, development work on the Leamside Line will also be taken forward alongside Northern Powerhouse Rail. This will be followed by a new route between Liverpool and Manchester, running via Manchester Airport and Warrington, and finally by improved connections across the Pennines between Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and York. Regular services will run onward to Newcastle via Darlington and Durham; Hull; and Chester for North Wales connections.

This will unlock new benefits for the people of the North supporting new, skilled jobs for the planning, development, design and construction of the project. The government is working closely with employers and local leaders to help fill local skills gaps and local colleges across the country are already set to receive £570 million to expand their training facilities.

The city regions of the North have huge untapped economic potential and the modern Industrial Strategy, published last June, set out a compelling economic case for prioritising 8 strategic sectors clustered across its city regions. Greater Manchester is one of the fastest-growing tech centres in Europe – with burgeoning cyber, professional and creative industries. Leeds and West Yorkshire are emerging as the ‘Northern Square Mile’ for financial services, while South Yorkshire is at the cutting edge on Defence and Advanced Manufacturing, Liverpool City Region on Life Sciences, and Newcastle and the North-East on the clean energy transition.

The government is working with mayors, other local leaders, and businesses to announce more detail on its Northern Growth Strategy taking advantage of these strengths, firing up productivity and prosperity across the North.

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said:

> “For too long, the North has been held back by underinvestment and years of dither and delay – but that ends now.

"Northern Powerhouse Rail will deliver faster, more frequent services across the great cities of the North, unlocking jobs, homes and opportunities and creating a world-class growth corridor that people of the region need and deserve."

Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary, Steve Reed, said:

"We're backing faster rail links across the North so people can get to work quicker and businesses can grow. Better connections mean better paid jobs, new investment in towns and cities, and stronger local economies.

"This is the first step towards building new routes between Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds - connecting people to new homes, new opportunities, and thriving high streets communities can be proud of."

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

"Two hundred years ago, we built the world's first passenger railway between Liverpool and Manchester – and changed history. After more than a decade of dither, delay and broken promises, this is the start of a new era, with a genuinely strategic approach and a government finally backing Northern Powerhouse Rail in full.

"A creaking rail system has held the North back for too long. Our journeys aren't just slower – our growth has been slower too. Poor connectivity doesn't just hold people back – it holds our economy back. It limits our productivity, restricts freight capacity, and chokes off opportunity.

"Today that changes. This is the kind of ambition we've been crying out for. Not another empty slogan or back of a fag packet plan but real investment, delivered in a proper partnership with local leaders that will unleash our latent potential and unlock growth in all of our communities right across the great North."

Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, said:

"Finally, we have a government with an ambitious vision for the North, firm commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail and an openness to an underground station in Manchester city centre. A modernised Manchester Piccadilly could become the Kings Cross of the North, acting as a catalyst for major growth in our city region and beyond.

"Over the past decade, we've become the UK's fastest growing city region, but underinvestment in rail infrastructure has long acted as a brake on further growth. Today marks a significant step forward for

Greater Manchester. We'll now work at pace to prove the case for an underground station and work up detailed designs for the route between Liverpool and Manchester."

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire said:

"For too long, unreliable rail links have caused misery for people living and working in the North, while holding back our ambitious plans for growth.

"Today we have a solid commitment from government to invest in connecting our towns and cities including taking forward plans for Bradford station, capacity upgrades in and out of Leeds, and electrification across the network to allow more frequent and faster trains.

"We made the case as Yorkshire mayors that we needed better connectivity between our biggest cities, and we are working with the government to deliver better transport across Yorkshire and the north.

"This will help us boost capacity, reliability and journey times between our biggest cities, driving jobs and growth across Yorkshire."

Oliver Coppard, Mayor of South Yorkshire said:

"For South Yorkshire, Northern Powerhouse Rail represents real progress. Better connections between Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester mean quicker, more reliable journeys, opening up more choice around work, skills and opportunity for everyone across our region.

"This plan for Northern Powerhouse Rail isn't just about faster trains. It's about working with central government to build a transport system that matches the ambition we have for South Yorkshire over the next decade and beyond. There's still a lot to do, but today's commitment from government gives us confidence we will see a step-change in transport across the North."

Kim McGuinness, Mayor of the North East said:

"The Leamside Line through County Durham is a once in a generation project that has the potential to transform our communities and I'm pleased the government has committed to work with us on this.

"My region deserves major investment in transport and that's what we're delivering, ensuring Northern Powerhouse Rail services reach Newcastle, via Darlington and Durham. We will work with government on the proposed Leamside reopening, aiming to bring back rail to parts of County Durham for the first time in decades."

David Skaith, Mayor of York and North Yorkshire, said:

> “This is a strong endorsement of the vision we set out in our White Rose Plan for Rail. For too long the North has missed out on investment, but this £45 billion commitment changes that.
>
> “By investing in capacity upgrades at York’s station, Northern Powerhouse Rail puts York at the heart of a modern transport network for the North.
>
> “Unlocking better and more reliable services for everyone who lives in, works in or visits York puts our city on an even stronger footing to grow the regional and national economy.”

Northern Powerhouse Rail will be kept within a fair funding envelope over its entire construction period to ensure it remains good value for taxpayers both now and in the future, avoiding a repeat of past mistakes where major projects like HS2 have gone significantly over budget.

A funding cap of £45 billion will be set for the programme. £1.1 billion over the Spending Review period is the first stage of this, allowing development and design work to progress and enabling the creation of a detailed delivery plan which will include timings.

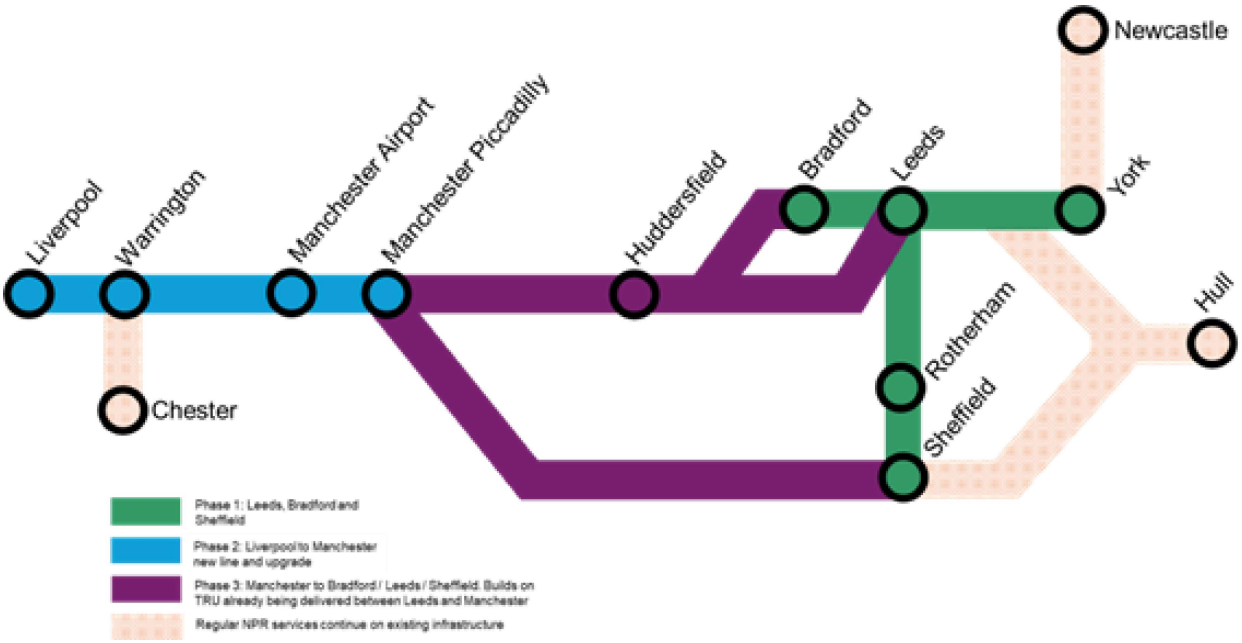
Alongside this, to support and build on the strategic ambition for the project, the government has set out its intention in the long term to build a new rail line between Birmingham and Manchester. This is not a reinstatement of HS2, further work is required to establish how it can best support our rail ambitions for across the North, and its delivery would happen after the completion of Northern Powerhouse Rail. The government is learning the lessons of HS2 to ensure that the programme does not repeat its failures. We will drive efficiency while still delivering key benefits for the North.

This comes as the government is progressing the Transpennine Route Upgrade, and we have already made a £15 billion investment into local transport in city regions and added 60,000 extra seats each week on the East Coast Mainline, with new services to Bradford and reduced journey times between London, Leeds and Newcastle.

Other action to unlock growth right across the country is already underway, with the approval of expanding Heathrow Airport set to create over 100,000 jobs, the multi-billion-pound deal for build Sizewell C expected to create savings of £2 million a year across our future electricity system, and the striking of trade agreements with the US, India, the EU and the Gulf injecting billions into the British economy.

More information

Phase map of Northern Powerhouse Rail:



Additional quotes
Henri Murison, Chief Executive of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, said:

"The Growth Plan recognises the significant untapped potential of the North of England, with improved transport between our cities and in time to Birmingham alongside wider investment the clear route to higher productivity growth.

"Northern Powerhouse Rail will enable a single labour market more like that of London and the South East so a young person in Bradford could aspire to work in Sheffield or Manchester, or a business there attract talent from further afield than they can today. The potential of the North will be unlocked, giving us better paid jobs and new homes.

"The need for improved global connectivity across the North is huge, and this will be achieved by connecting Manchester Airport directly to Liverpool and across to cities like Leeds."

Jerome Frost OBE, CEO of Arup, said:

"We welcome the government's commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) as a truly transformational moment for the North of England. This infrastructure will help unlock the region's vast economic potential, which will be felt positively across the UK.

"At Arup, we're ready to help turn this vision into reality. Our analysis shows that properly delivered, NPR will do far more than move people faster between cities. It will generate tens of billions in economic benefits and provide the sustainable transport choices essential for future communities.

"The region deserves transport infrastructure that matches its ambitions. Today's announcement represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a transport system that the North of England needs to turbo-charge economic growth."

Dame Clare Barclay, Chair of the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, said:

"This ambitious plan will strengthen the North's business base, fuelling productivity and national economic growth. Better connectivity and long-term investment will help firms start, scale, innovate and compete across the region, supporting our modern Industrial Strategy."

Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, Deputy Chair of the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, said:

"The Industrial Strategy set out the compelling economic case for a more connected and productive North and today's announcement is a welcome step forward. This investment will support the region to thrive and recognises that the North is a great place to invest with its skilled workforce and world-class strengths in the Industrial Strategy's growth-driving sectors."

Ken O'Toole, MAG CEO, said:

"This is a welcome and long overdue step towards the creation of a highly productive and internationally competitive Northern growth corridor.

"By placing Manchester Airport at the heart of a full Northern Powerhouse Rail Network, people and businesses across the region will have the direct access they deserve to the world.

"That will help high-value industries to thrive and attract investors and visitors to all parts of the North - maximising the region's contribution to national growth.

"The project will deliver the public investment needed to ensure the north benefits fully from MAG's £1.3bn transformation of Manchester Airport. It will unlock the full capacity of Manchester's existing two full-length runways - capacity that is available now.

"That is why we look forward to working with government and regional partners on ways to deliver NPR at the earliest possible opportunity."

Lord O'Neill of Gatley, Former Chair of Cities Growth Commission said:

"I have believed ever since I Chaired the Cities Growth Commission, in 2013/14, that a Northern Powerhouse Rail, correctly done, would unlock the agglomeration potential of our great Northern cities. Most importantly, it would be strong enough to boost the nation's Growth trend. This announcement today, is the most serious intention to develop this journey, and should add to the growing evidence that the North is one of positive jewels."

Chris Oglesby, Chief Executive of Bruntwood and Bruntwood SciTech, commented:

"The government's commitment to working with local partners to deliver NPR is welcome and we are also pleased to see the government pledging to a new rail link between Birmingham and Manchester – supporting the original vision set out by HS2 for greater links between the capital and the UK's regions. The combination of strong national commitment over the long term with mechanisms that support local decision making is an important step forward in ensuring that we finally have a transport system that is fit for the 21st century.

"For businesses, reliable connectivity is fundamental to a modern productive economy. It unlocks investment, attracts international business and supports growth."

Rami Baitiéh, CEO of Morrisons, said:

"As well as having stores and colleagues across the country, we have a strong and longstanding base in Bradford. Northern Powerhouse Rail will connect Bradford better not only to other key cities in Yorkshire but also to Manchester, Manchester Airport and the wider North West which is going to be hugely beneficial for businesses and the regional economy."

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