



West Coast Rail 250

A R A I L W A Y F O R T H E 2 1 S T C E N T U R Y

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT DETERMINATION OF NETWORK RAIL'S OUTPUTS AND FUNDING FOR CONTROL PERIOD 5 (2014-19)

Response of the West Coast Rail 250 Campaign

Introduction

1) West Coast Rail 250 is a non-party political organisation representing over 40 local authorities and ITAs along the WCML, which has long-established and excellent working relationships with Network Rail, the relevant Train Operating Companies, and the Department for Transport, and:

“campaigns for improved and environmentally sustainable rail services along the West Coast Main Line to support the economic development and social cohesion of communities along the WCML rail corridor”

2) As a Campaign we have provided consistent and strong support for continued investment in a better railway. This campaigning work sits alongside our support for all sections of the rail industry in achieving greater productivity and efficiency in the day-to-day operation of the railway.

3) The West Coast Rail 250 Campaign welcomes the publication of the draft Determination of Network Rail’s Outputs and Funding for 2014-19 (Control Period 5).

Renewals and Maintenance

4) We recognise the huge contribution that the West Coast Main Line makes to the national economy as well as to the local and regional economies along the line. It is one of the busiest mixed railway lines in

the world and requires not only major renewals and maintenance budgets but also the completion of up-grading schemes that were dropped as part of the post-Railtrack review.

5) The recommendations of the West Coast South Reliability Report, jointly agreed by NWR & ORR in November 2012, must be implemented before the end of CP4 and not allowed to slip any further.

6) This next CP must tackle the issue of ageing infrastructure on the WCML. We re-iterate our concern about the need for Network Rail to take every opportunity to enhance the resilience of the network and not just make replacements on a 'like for like' basis. If there are enhancements contained within the NWR scheduled renewals budget then we call on the ORR to insist on making these more apparent so that TOCs, FOCs and wider customers can be re-assured.

7) We call for much more transparency in the use of the Passenger Journey Improvement Fund, the NWR Discretionary Fund and the Journey Time Reduction Fund in promoting incremental improvements to renewals projects. With regard to the latter we understand that the ORR has given the approval to a £200m East Coast Connections Fund. As such we believe that the Journey Time Reduction Fund (which we understand is about £300m) should focus primarily on the WCML with bidding for this NWR money concentrating on the worst performing lines and stretches such as Lancaster to Glasgow which need track, wires & signalling renewal in CP5 & 6.

8) We welcome the resignalling enhancements proposed at Colwich, Rugeley, Macclesfield, Watford; resignalling and remodelling at Preston, Carlisle and Warrington; and track renewals programmes including Carlisle, Preston, Crewe, Carnforth North, Wembley North & Central, Hanslope Junction. Similarly, we welcome the resignalling of Liverpool Lime Street, but in this case we have concerns that the current proposals are based on a like for like renewal in modern equivalent form, which may not accommodate the enhanced services committed in the Northern Hub and electrification projects, let alone provide capacity for the future development of WCML services to and from Liverpool. We seek the ORR's assurance that funding will be available for the enhancements required at Liverpool Lime Street to enable the full benefits of major investments elsewhere to be realised.

9) We also have concerns about the timing of major schemes. Much of the major work planned for 2014-15 takes place in main holiday periods

and there appears to be little regard for the number of people who do travel at these times and the impact holiday line closures have on the tourist economy in areas such as Cumbria. In the future, we hope it should be possible to provide more diversionary routes or otherwise minimise the impact of engineering works on tourist destinations that make a significant contribution to the national economy.

Station Improvements

10) The condition of many stations along the WCML is lamentable and we remind the ORR that seven out of the ten 'worst' stations were identified in the Chris Green Report as being on the West Coast. The Station Improvement Fund of £200m is barely adequate for these purposes. We also call on the ORR to insist that still unresolved issues relating to 'residual value' calculations are finally tackled so as to facilitate much greater private sector investment in our under-used stations.

Punctuality and Reliability

11) We believe that the minimum 90% punctuality and reliability targets are reasonable but recognise that, for long-distance West Coast services, this represents a major improvement as well as a considerable challenge to the industry.

12) Therefore we welcome the statement at paragraph 31 (page 17):
“There will be a renewed focus on improving the worst performing services, with the performance for each franchised operator in England & Wales to reach a minimum of 90% of trains on time. This will benefit customers on routes where train service reliability has been much worse than average.”

Freight

13) We note that the ORR has amended proposals for CP5 freight charge increases but we remain concerned that no incentives have been proposed to encourage the use of faster locomotives. The speed of freight, especially on the northern end of the WCML, is a real issue with too many diesels still managing only 25 MPH over Shap and thereby taking up disproportionate time and capacity. To complement the North West electrification scheme and the replacement of many diesel units by electric units for passenger services, the ORR should be looking to incentivise a switch to electric traction for freight services, with reduced charges for sustained 75 MPH running. We accept that for this to be effective, it will be necessary to electrify sections of line into freight terminals and consider electrification of freight diversionary routes, but

note that there are instances where short extensions of electrification can deliver real benefits, for example the electrification of less than 1km of track into the intermodal terminal adjacent to the WCML at Ditton (Mersey Multi-modal Gateway), where all services are currently diesel-hauled.

High Speed 2 and Euston Station

14) We are concerned that the Draft Determination does not specify any outputs in respect of the construction of HS2. As a Campaign we have a real concern about the future of Euston Station which is already rightly identified as the worst station in London, and underlined as such in the most recent findings of the National Passenger Survey.

15) The CP5 Plan needs to show proper planning for the growth and refurbishment of Euston Station so as to accommodate continuing expansion in passenger numbers with, or without, HS2.

16) We look to the ORR to protect the interests of current and future rail users by requiring NWR to show the necessary leadership and plan the future re-development of Euston Station.

Thank you for the invitation to comment on your draft proposals.

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