

Rail North Committee Meeting - Item 5

Subject: Blake-Jones and Williams Reviews

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Meeting Date: Thursday 12 May 2020

1. Purpose of the Report:

This paper updates the Committee on progress in implementing the Blake-Jones Action Plan and how we intend to link the Blake-Jones actions to ongoing work on rail reform. The paper was deferred from the 12th March meeting and has been updated for consideration at the 12th May meeting in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Executive Summary:

- 2.1 The paper presents a proposed amended version of the Blake-Jones Action Plan. The amendments have been made to give focus to progress that can be made in the near future, to reflect the Northern situation, the anticipated publication of the Williams White Paper and progress of rail reform and to address these in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.2 The original paper was prepared before the current Covid-19 situation. As we know, the impact of the pandemic is far-reaching and will have ramifications across the rail sector, the wider economy and society for months and possibly years. The recommendations made in this paper remain just as relevant in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by the pandemic as they did before - ensuring the Committee and its constituent authorities and officers remain informed, influential and effective as the rail sector emerges from the crisis and supports the best possible rail outcomes for passengers and communities across the North.

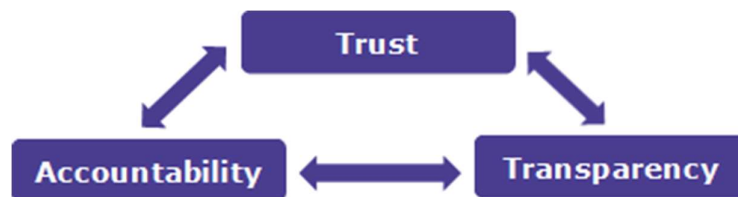
3. Consideration:

3.1 [Background to the review](#)

The Blake-Jones Review was initiated in the Summer of 2018, following the well-documented issues with the introduction of the May 2018 timetable. The Glaister Review, undertaken by the Office of Rail and Road, published its interim findings in September 2018. This review set

out the multiple, cumulative and fundamental problems with the current railway system of which the May 18 consequences were a result. The subsequent Williams Rail Review and anticipated White Paper have taken their momentum and purpose from the lessons to be learned from the May 2018 timetable problems.

- 3.2 The Blake-Jones Review was undertaken at the time to specifically consider the arrangements in place for the Northern and TPE franchises, and whether those unique arrangements contributed to, or complicated the handling of the crisis.
- 3.3 The conclusions of the review were that they did not. However, there is no question that the crisis has placed these arrangements under extraordinary stress, and in some ways have proved them to be not fit for purpose. This has resulted in further undermining of trust between partners, the public and industry players.
- 3.4 The Blake-Jones Action Plan therefore focusses on things that will help address this fundamental issue of trust whilst wider rail reform progresses. Each action aims to create the environment for trust, accountability and transparency to be re-established between all parties – Operators, Rail North Committee, DfT, officers and other partners. **The principles** underpinning these actions are to increase trust, transparency and accountability.



- 3.5 The 6 areas of action within the Blake-Jones review are as follows:
- a) Passenger promise
 - b) Decision-making
 - c) Better information sharing
 - d) Co-ordinated forward planning
 - e) Resources
 - f) Engagement in wider changes
- 3.6 **Proposed actions for implementation in the near future, when appropriate in the current pandemic context.**

Action 1: Re-invigorate Northern and TPE Passenger Promises¹²

¹ https://d2cf7kiw5xizhy.cloudfront.net/images/policy/2019-01/Northern_Customer_Promise.pdf

² <https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/about-us/passengers-charter>

The current TPE and Northern Passenger promises are good, but probably lack a bit of credibility. When advice about travel changes, officials will engage with the operators to see how this can be addressed and will report on progress at the next Committee meeting.

- 3.7 **Action 2:** Develop a Transport for the North/DfT Passenger Promise (this could be configured as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Charter).

This promise/MOU would set out more clearly how DfT/Transport for the North were going to engage with each other in order to result in the best possible passenger outcomes, particularly how we will work together to support meaningful and constructive rail reform.

For example, this could include the following type of promise:

- a) Make the case for investment and service improvement;
- b) Advocate efficient and sensible use of resources;
- c) Take account of all passengers and passenger interests when making decisions and setting out priorities, including early passenger consultation;
- d) Be clear to operators and passengers about how decisions and trade-offs are made;
- e) Fully assess risks when implementing changes and actively mitigate these where possible;
- f) Celebrate success and participate in positive stories that occur across the network; and
- g) Support train operators to deliver their service commitments according to their contracts and empower the Contract Management teams to manage these contracts in-life.

- 3.8 **Action 3:** Issue a revised framework for 'Who does what', including who will be consulted, informed, responsible and accountable for matters affecting the delivery of the Northern and TPE franchises.

The purpose of this framework will be to set out transparently the various bodies and their roles in delivering outcomes for passengers. We propose to set out some examples so that members, officials and other stakeholders have better visibility of how the decision-making processes work at all levels (including on-going engagement between Operators and their stakeholders), and how and when issues are escalated.

3.9 **Action 4:** Implement revised Rail North Committee meeting arrangements.

Move to quarterly meetings with a proposed agenda as follows:

- a) Priorities for future franchises/services;
- b) Rail devolution/reform matters;
- c) Infrastructure priorities;
- d) Matters for Committee decision from Rail North Partnership Board;
- e) Update from Officers' Reference Group (ORG) on rail matters affecting constituent authorities (for noting);
- f) Report on in-life issues (for noting);
- g) Report on matters reserved for Secretary of State (for noting); and
- h) Forward planning and paper commissioning.

The success of setting a more strategic agenda for Rail North Committee is dependent on the successful delivery of other components of the Action Plan. Committee members will want to be assured that other matters are being handled in accordance with their guidance. Actions 5 and 6 are therefore particularly important in making sure that this is the case.

3.10 **Action 5:** Implement revised Rail North Partnership Board (RNPB) meeting arrangements.

Liaise with the Rail North Committee Chair and existing RNPB members to agree most efficient and valuable arrangement that suitably serves the needs of the Committee, and the day to day governance required for the ongoing commercial and contractual management of Northern and TPE franchises. For example, this could include a more regular, informal Committee Chair meeting with officials and colleagues to agree which matters should be escalated to the Committee. The intent is to preserve Committee time for strategic matters where members can add most value.

3.11 **Action 6:** Re-purpose the Officer Reference Group (ORG)

By building on existing stakeholder relation management within both operators, on-going day-to-day concerns and activity relating to constituent authority areas should be dealt with through the ORG. It would be helpful for this work to be more visible to Rail North Committee members through a regular update at the committee meetings. Ongoing engagement between TOCs and ORG will reassure RNC members that tactical issues affecting passengers in their authorities are receiving attention, whilst the Committee focusses on strategic issues and convenes less frequently.

Transport for the North officers will liaise with ORG members to work through and agree the best way to implement these changes over the coming weeks.

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- 3.12 **Action 7.** Development of indicative 5-year timeline of potential strategic decisions affecting train operations, infrastructure, and other significant transport interventions.

Co-ordinate with DfT, Network Rail and other delivery partners to develop a strategic forward-look to which all parties feel some ownership. It is unlikely that it will be possible to get fixed, agreed dates, but an **indicative** agreed timeline will help ensure advice, views and decisions by the Rail North Committee are given at a point where they can have most influence.

- 3.13 **Action 8:** Develop a paper for consideration by Rail North Committee/Transport for the North to examine the issues, challenges, preference and potential pathways for delivering further rail devolution.

In the light of the William's White Paper, Rail North Committee, Transport for the North and constituent authorities will want to consider how to co-ordinate next steps in delivering further devolution, and how this can be taken forward in the context of the Covid pandemic, changes to travel behaviour and patterns, and the need to support the recovering economy.

We propose bringing a paper to the next Committee meeting which examines options for the direction of devolution in the light of the current situation, work undertaken to looking at the geographical considerations of devolutions, and the opportunities offered by the hiatus to 'normal' arrangements. We will build on work already undertaken by Transport for the North and engage with Officers Reference Group to ensure that specific local concerns and aspirations are reflected in the paper.

4. Recommendation:

- 4.1 Members are invited to comment on the Actions and offer suggestions or amendments.
- 4.2 Members are asked to approve the Action plan (subject to any agreed amendments).
- 4.3 Members are asked to note that officials will work with individual members, their authority officials and the DfT to progress these actions. A further update and longer-term proposals will be presented at a future Committee meeting.
- 4.4 Members are recommended to commission a paper for the next meeting to consider options for engagement and direction of further devolution in the light of potential reform in the current situation.

List of Background Documents:

<https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/about-us/passengers-chart>

https://d2cf7kiw5xizhy.cloudfront.net/images/policy/2019-01/Northern_Customer_Promise.pdf

Required Considerations

Please confirm using the yes/no options whether or not the following considerations are of relevance to this report.

Equalities:

Age		No
Disability		No
Gender Reassignment		No
Pregnancy and Maternity		No
Race		No
Religion or Belief		No
Sex		No
Sexual Orientation		No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Equalities	A full Impact assessment has not been carried out because there are no decisions in the paper.	Jane Cornthwaite	David Hoggarth

Environment and Sustainability

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Sustainability / Environment – including considerations regarding Active Travel and Wellbeing	A full impact assessment has not been carried out because the recommendations do not impact on sustainability/environmental issues.	Jane Cornthwaite	David Hoggarth

Legal

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	Transport for the North's legal team has confirmed there are no legal implications.	Deborah Dimock	Julie Openshaw

Finance

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	Transport for the North Finance Team has confirmed there are no financial implications (see Resource box below).	Gareth Sutton	Iain Craven

Resource

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Resource	There is an outstanding request for further resources for the Transport for the North Strategic Rail team. The recommendations in this paper do not require these further resources and can be delivered without these additional resources. The subject of resourcing will be revisited pending the successful delivery of this initial phase of work	Stephen Hipwell	Dawn Madin

Risk

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	There are new risks highlighted in this paper relating to the impact on rail services from the Covid-19 crisis. These will be included in the relevant risk register.	Jane Cornthwaite	David Hoggarth

Consultation

	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Consultation	A consultation has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the consideration	Jane Cornthwaite	David Hoggarth