

Transport for the North Board Meeting– Item 8

Subject: Blake Jones Review

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Sponsor: David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director

Meeting Date: Wednesday 31 July 2019

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To seek Board approval for Transport for the North to adopt the Blake Jones Action Plan.

2. Executive Summary:

- 2.1 The Blake Jones Review of the Rail North Partnership, published on 19 July 2019, recommends a number of solutions to help avoid the events of May 2018 happening again. These solutions include an **Action Plan** for implementation by the partners.
- 2.2 The Blake Jones Review proposed the **Action Plan** after citing:
- a need to strengthen existing arrangements to give a greater focus on passenger impacts including the need for closer collaboration with passenger representation groups; and
 - a need for greater engagement of decision-makers in strategic choices and franchise development, and in ensuring the priorities they set carry through to the Train Operating Companies and Network Rail.
- 2.3 The Action Plan has **Six key areas of focus**: working with TOCs on a Passenger Promise; creating a clearer and more effective mechanism and environment for decision-making; reviewing and enhancing the process of information sharing; integrated forward-planning and an enhanced communications protocol; determining and deployed the required resources and, considering wider changes building on the Call for Evidence response to the Williams Review.
- 2.4 In adopting the Action Plan, Transport for the North officers will oversee its implementation and provide regular progress updates to

the Board. Successful delivery is dependent on partner actions and appropriate resourcing (which will be considered as part of the early implementation).

3. Background to the Blake Jones Review:

3.1 The Blake Jones Review of the Rail North Partnership undertaken by Cllr Judith Blake and the Rail Minister, Andrew Jones focuses on the impact of the problems that occurred a year ago with the introduction of the May 2018 timetable.

3.2 It makes a series of short-term recommendations aimed at putting passengers at the heart of decision making in the industry and helping ensure the events around the May 2018 timetable change, and the severe impact on people and businesses, cannot happen again. The longer-term themes, referred to in the 'wider considerations', are likely to be carried through into the William Review. These include:

- The need for a more effective 'guiding mind' for rail services in the North;
- greater integration of track and train through more accountability of the infrastructure provider;
- stronger alignment of infrastructure and train service planning and with the Strategic Transport Plan produced by Transport for the North; and
- the potential for further devolution of rail responsibilities to the North.

3.3 These recommendations from the Review form part of the evidence base for the Transport for the North submission to the Williams Review, and are expected to continue informing the development of the role of the Rail North Partnership, and Transport for the North and the Department for Transport, in the months and years ahead.

4. Action Plan Recommendations:

4.1 The actions and milestones are set out in the paragraphs below:

4.2 The Passenger Promise:

1. Work with the TOCs to produce a concise, accessible Passenger Promise, and develop proposals for promoting and expanding passenger engagement in decision making, for discussion and agreement ([September 2019](#));

2. Invite the TOCs to produce draft proposals for improved passenger information systems for discussion and agreement (August 2019);
3. Invite Transport Focus to help establish new ways of working, possibly through a Memorandum of Understanding to set out the terms (including specific reporting mechanisms) (August 2019); and
4. Produce a Performance Snapshot for discussion and agreement. This will be impacted by the dashboard information made available by Network Rail (August 2019).

4.3 **Improved Decision-making:**

Develop a Formal Scheme of Delegation. (October 2019) This will include, among other elements:

1. Role profiles for all relevant parties, setting out their responsibilities and relationships, in particular the Rail North Partnership Board Members and Chair, and the Rail North Committee Chair;
2. Consideration of where greater responsibility can be delegated within the framework of the current Partnership Agreement from the DfT to the Rail North Partnership where there are no material financial consequences or risks for DfT, to Northern leaders to enable them to be responsible and accountable for relevant choices, and to Rail North Partnership officers in order to ensure the RNP Board retains a strategic focus;
3. A breakdown of what decisions are taken, when, by whom, and who should be consulted;
4. As part of Transport for the North's Constitutional Review currently being undertaken, a revised Rail North Committee Terms of Reference to allow for greater visibility and accountability between the Rail North Committee and Rail North Partnership Board. (This may include changes to meeting patterns to schedule alternating meetings – and reflecting the Integrated Forward Plan – and the membership of the Committee to provide for Transport for the North Partnership Board Members to formally attend in a non-voting, ex-officio capacity in order to enable direct reporting.) (September 2019);
5. Delivery of the Rail North Partnership Annual Review (November 2019); and
6. The Production of a draft Memorandum of Understanding between DfT, Transport for the North, and Network Rail for discussion and agreement. (September 2019).

4.4 **Enhanced Information sharing:**

1. Review the information sharing and confidentiality provisions within the bounds of the current Partnership Agreement and Franchise Agreements. (This will reflect the new scheme of delegation, and will require the identification of different types of sensitive information currently used within the Partnership.) (October 2019); and
2. Produce a draft Decision-making Log for discussion and agreement. (September 2019)

4.5 **Better Forward planning:**

Develop a draft Integrated Forward Plan, including a new Communication Protocol, for discussion and agreement.

(This will reflect the new scheme of delegation, and will require coordination with Network Rail and the TOCs to ensure read-across with their business plans, as well as to request Network Rail provide an ongoing information dashboard and to agree the details of it.) (Autumn 2019).

4.6 **Resources:**

Establish the financial requirements of additional resources for the RNP team and Transport for the North Strategic Rail team to provide for the Recommendations. (August 2019)

1. This may include some temporary resource to enable delivery, and will establish what the financial implications are for all partners; and
2. Produce a draft Member-officer Code of Conduct for discussion and agreement, similar to that used by local authorities, which addresses the need to more firmly reflect that the Rail North Partnership represents the interests of both Northern communities as well as the Government. (September 2019).

4.7 **Wider changes:** (Autumn 2019)

1. Build on the Call for Evidence response to the Williams Review into the operation of the rail industry, reflecting the questions raised regarding the need for:
 - A guiding mind on system-wide risk
 - Greater Northern accountability of Network Rail
 - The reconfiguration of the rail franchises
 - Full devolution of responsibilities to the North
2. Develop an Evidence Base with relevant information for the case for the North to assume full control of the franchising process.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Transport for the North, working through the Strategic Rail Programme, will work, with Partners, on the implementation of the Action Plan Recommendations against the Delivery Milestones cited above while continuing to work with Partners – including the Williams Review Team - on the Wider Changes which will shape the future working and success of the sector and the way in which devolution can play its part in the process.
- 5.2 A Review implementation team has been established with representatives from Transport for the North, the Department for Transport and the Rail North Partnership. The team was due to meet for the first time as this report was being finalised. As an early step, the team is establishing the resources required to implement the Action Plan.
- 5.3 Once the Transport for the North Board has considered the Action Plan it is proposed that, if agreed, this is proactively communicated, with members of the Board advocating the approach and the requirement of the Williams Review to deliver on longer-term reforms.
- 5.4 This will be done through a pro-active press release cascaded to media and through social media channels - and by offering media comment/interviews where appropriate.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the Board approves adoption of the Blake Jones Action Plan and progression of the longer-term 'Wider Changes' work through the Williams Review.
- 6.2 That a further report is brought to the Board once the resource implications have been established in relation to the actions. Progress will be dependent on commitment and resources from partners.

List of Background Documents:

The Blake Jones Review

<https://transportfornorth.com/reports/blake-jones-review-rail-north-partnership-technical-annex/>
<https://transportfornorth.com/reports/blake-jones-review-rail-north-partnership-summary-report/>

Required Considerations

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 the report does not propose any new strategy or service provision	Rail Stakeholder Manager	Strategic Rail Director

Environment and Sustainability

No

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 report does not propose any new strategy or service provision	Rail Stakeholder Manager	Strategic Rail Director

Legal

Yes

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	The review proposes changes to the Transport for the North Constitution. These will be developed and brought to the Board for future consideration	Head of Legal	Strategic Rail Director

Finance

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	There are likely to be financial implications for all partners as a result of the review of resources. Detailed proposals will be developed as part of the implementation of the Action Plan and reported to a future Board. However, it is likely, given growing pressure on Transport for the North's Core resources that additional activity arising from this, and potentially other reviews, will need to be the subject of a separate funding agreement with the Department.	Strategic Rail Director	Finance Director

Resource

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
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Resource	The Action Plan includes a review of resource requirements. Detailed proposals will be developed as part of the implementation of the Action Plan and reported to a future Board.	Strategic Rail Director	Director of Business Capabilities
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Risk

No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	A risk assessment has not been carried out at this stage.	Rail Stakeholder Manager	Strategic Rail Director

Consultation

Yes

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Consultation	Consultation has been carried out with Transport for the North members as part of the evidence gathering for the review.	Rail Stakeholder Manager	Strategic Rail Director