



# Briefing on the Reinstatement of the Beverley to York Rail Line

## Overview

Hull and Beverley are linked with Market Weighton, Pocklington, Stamford Bridge and York by the increasingly congested A1079. The Minsters Rail Campaign believes that the former 32-mile Beverley to York “Minsters” rail line (closed in 1965), which branched off the existing Hull-Scarborough line at Beverley and served these places, should be reinstated. This will contribute substantially to the long-term economic and social future of the East Riding, improving public transport, reducing car dependency and encouraging sustainable development. It will also be an alternative link from Hull and the East Riding to the rest of the rail network, needed because the existing rail infrastructure serving Hull lacks resilience. Regionally, the line will contribute to the Government’s “Northern Powerhouse” initiative, improving east-west connectivity between East and North Yorkshire.

A study by consultants Carl Bro in 2005 commissioned by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC) found that the reinstatement would be feasible and achievable. The study put forward potential routes round Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge (the original routes through them having been built over many years ago), chosen for sound railway engineering reasons, and concluded that at £239m (2005 figure) the reinstatement would represent value for money in terms of the Department for Transport’s benefit/cost analysis.

(For a more detailed summary of the main points of the Carl Bro study, see the “Facts and FAQs” page on our website: [www.minstersrail.net](http://www.minstersrail.net).)

## 1. Existing transport links

### 1.1 The A1079 between Beverley and York

The main A1079 road between Beverley and York is barely adequate to meet current needs. The ERYC Local Plan Strategy document (adopted in 2016) recognises that the A1079 is already seriously congested at peak times and that “... the road network cannot be expected to accommodate unconstrained traffic growth” (paras 7.43-7.44).

Despite a few improvements in recent years the A1079 is often slow. Many serious accidents occur, and it is reckoned to be the seventh most dangerous road in the UK (see [www.a1079.org](http://www.a1079.org)). Except for 1.5 miles, the 27 miles from Beverley to the A64 York bypass are single carriageway. Upgrading is hugely expensive: the dualling of one mile was cancelled as costs rose to £26m - nearly twice the estimate.

### 1.2 Bus services between Hull and York

Bus journeys along the A1079 are slow (an hour for the 22 miles from Market Weighton to Hull, 45 minutes for the 21 miles from Market Weighton to York). At peak times buses are caught up in heavy congestion and not able to keep to schedule. They are not an attractive alternative for commuters.

### 1.3 Rail services between Hull and York via Selby

The current rail route between Hull and York via Selby is slow (most trains take 68-75 minutes), with irregular and infrequent services, some of which involve changing at Selby. (By contrast the direct Minsters line route would offer a Hull to York journey time of 56 minutes.) This is not attractive to commuters. The improvement planned by the Northern franchise (an

hourly service) is welcome, but will of course not be of benefit to Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge.

## **2. The Minsters route and the national rail network**

### **2.1 Existing routes from Hull to the mainline rail network lack resilience**

The main line to Hull from the west is at risk of disruption. It passes along the Humber foreshore, an area at high risk of flooding, and the line has been closed briefly by flood or tide twice in the last ten years. Predicted sea level rise in the Humber estuary may make this more a frequent occurrence. The 2010 ERYC draft Climate Change Strategy (para 4.5.6) states that before 2050 “*Alternative routes may need to be found or existing routes protected for road and rail infrastructure*”. The swing bridges at Selby and Goole add vulnerability to the routes serving Hull: shipping accidents or bridge problems are infrequent, but the resulting disruption is unpredictable and may be long-lasting. For reasons of network resilience a diversionary rail link to Hull is therefore needed. Clearly the Minsters Line will not *replace* the main route to the west, but it will ensure that, if the latter is badly disrupted, Hull and the East Riding will not be cut off from the mainline rail network, with serious economic consequences (as was the case when the Devon and Cornwall main line was cut at Dawlish by sea damage for two months in 2014).

### **2.2 Northern Transport Strategy (Northern Powerhouse): east-west connectivity**

*Transport for the North's* Northern Transport Strategy stresses the importance of improved east-west communication between northern cities. The planned improvements to the trans-Pennine Hull - Leeds - Manchester route will be a major part of this. The reopened Minsters route will also play a part in east-west connectivity, allowing journeys between the East Riding via York to towns in North Yorkshire such as Harrogate. The Minsters route would play a more major role in east-west connectivity in the event of the Hull - Leeds line being disrupted (see 2.1, above).

### **2.3 Onward rail travel via York; HS2**

At present anyone from the Western Wolds making a long-distance rail journey must go to York by bus or private car. The Minsters line will connect at York with services to many long-distance destinations.

Plans for HS2 have been welcomed by Yorkshire councils and LEPs. York will become a major point of connection into HS2. But without a rail link to York through the Western Wolds, its communities and businesses will not be able to make best use of the economic and travel benefits which HS2 will bring.

## **3. Support for the reinstatement of the Minsters line**

### **3.1 Political: East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC); other local authorities; MPs**

ERYC is in principle supportive of the reinstatement of the Beverley to York rail line.

It funded the feasibility study by consultants Carl Bro (2005), which found that the reinstatement is feasible with a favourable benefit/cost ratio and identified workable alternative routes round Market Weighton, Pocklington and Stamford Bridge where the original line has been built over.

Contrary to proposals in previous ERYC planning documents, the East Riding Local Plan adopted in 2016 does not safeguard the whole route including the alternative routes round the built-over areas. This is because the Council did not see a prospect of funding from its own resources becoming available for the reinstatement of the line within the plan period (i.e. up to 2029), and therefore it felt that it could not justify protecting the route.

However, ERYC does remain committed to the long-term reinstatement:

*“the Council recognises the benefit that such a proposal [i.e. the reinstatement] could bring to the wider area and will work with neighbouring authorities, partners and funding bodies to explore opportunities to promote this course of action”.*

(East Riding Local Plan Strategy document, para 5.61)

With the help of Graham Stuart MP, a very positive meeting about the proposed reinstatement was held with the Rail Minister Paul Maynard MP in October 2016. It is now clear that the funding of rail reinstatements is the responsibility of Network Rail (NR), and that if, after further study, NR accepts the project, it will have no impact on local authority finances. This is also referred to in section 6, below.

The reinstatement is also supported by the *City of York Council* and numerous town and parish councils.

We are pleased to acknowledge the strong support of a number of MPs in the region, including Graham Stuart, Julian Sturdy and Rachael Maskell.

### **3.2 Transport operators**

Fears have been expressed that the reopened Minsters line would undermine and lead to the closure of some bus services along the A1079 corridor. However, the Chairman of *East Yorkshire Motor Services* (EYMS), the main bus operator in the area, is a supporter of the reinstatement, seeing a role for EYMS in providing services that would connect into train services on the line.

The open-access operator *Hull Trains* has become a major player in the area's transport network, providing an excellent service between Hull and London, with some services also serving Beverley. The Minsters Rail Campaign is talking with Hull Trains, as well as the other train operating companies serving Hull and the East Riding, and looks forward to their support for the reinstatement.

## **4. Towards a business case**

### **4.1 The 2005 Carl Bro feasibility study**

The 2005 feasibility study showed that many private car users would switch to a rail service if it was available. Since 2005 conditions on the A1079 have deteriorated considerably, and this response would almost certainly now be higher. The journey times offered by the reopened line will be attractive. (Hull-York, 36 miles: 56 minutes; Beverley-York, 32 miles: 46 minutes.) Usage of other rail lines reopened in the last few years invariably far exceeds expectations.

### **4.2 East Riding disadvantaged by unreliable transport infrastructure**

The ERYC Economic Development Strategy 2012-2016 (2012) advises priority for projects "which deliver connectivity infrastructure for growth". Para 8.4.17 states: "*Delays and unreliability in the area's transport infrastructure weaken the East Riding's strategic position with its surrounding cities and also [have] a direct economic cost in terms of reducing productivity through increased journey times.*"

The reopened Minsters line will benefit the area economically by providing an additional route to the west, thus reducing the economic cost of the area's unreliable transport infrastructure.

### **4.3 The obligation to favour sustainable transport**

As already noted, the A1079 is already seriously congested at peak times. Without a sustainable public transport alternative, it is inevitable that the number of extra journeys which will result from the predicted housing developments along the A1079 corridor, plus freight haulage, will have a detrimental effect on journey times and on the quality of life of the population along the route.

Reinstatement of the Minsters line will be an effective way of encouraging modal shift away from car use and of meeting the sustainable transport obligations which Government places on local councils.

### **4.4 Economic growth arising from rail reopenings**

There is ample evidence of the economic growth that arises from a rail reopening. Following the reopening of the Borders line in Scotland in September 2015, tourism, house prices and inward investment have all increased considerably.

## ***5. Transport needs that will be served by the direct Minsters line***

### **5.1 Travel to work**

The ERYC Economic Development Strategy 2012-2016 (2012) states that 45% of East Riding residents travel outside the area for work and 20% of the East Riding workforce travel into the area (page 7, para 2.3.3). A large part of this is by car. This can only increase due to projected housing development, leading to further peak-hour delays on overcrowded roads such as the A1079. Travel to work time is an issue for businesses, and they will welcome the fact that the Minsters rail route will open up for their employees within reach of the line a new era of quicker and calmer journeys to work.

### **5.2 Education**

Students in further and higher education are increasingly studying at universities and colleges near to home, due to high tuition fees. Local students at the universities and colleges in Hull and York represent a travel market whose public transport needs are not being met at present.

### **5.3 Health**

The hospitals in Cottingham and Hull are major regional centres for many medical specialties. On-site parking is inadequate and expensive. A York-Hull rail service via Beverley, with connecting bus services, would meet the needs of patients and relatives from the Western Wolds towns.

### **5.4 Retail**

A reliable rail service from the Western Wolds towns and villages would enable residents to access easily the major retail centres of Hull and York (and also Leeds and Meadowhall).

### **5.5 Tourism**

The ERYC Economic Development Strategy 2012-2016 (page 49 figure 14) shows “*underdeveloped tourism offer*” as a weakness. The Western Wolds market towns are in need of visitors to boost their economy but road congestion and lack of parking is limiting their potential. The reinstatement of the York-Beverley-Hull rail line could be a catalyst for a considerable increase in tourism. It must be noted that Hull’s City of Culture status in 2017 will add to its tourism potential in the years beyond.

### **5.6 Hull - new industrial development; freight**

As the number of passenger trains on the main line out of Hull increases, there will be fewer paths for freight trains. The new investment in manufacturing in Hull by Siemens will add to the pressure on the existing routes to the city, both road and rail, passenger and freight. If Hull-York services use the Minsters route to York via Beverley, this will free up paths for freight on the main line.

## ***6. A long-term aspiration: making it happen***

The line will provide improved transport and economic growth in East Yorkshire in the same way that the Borders line (reopened in September 2015) is already doing for that part of Scotland. But it will also have a wider significance, contributing to east-west connectivity and to the resilience of the region’s rail network. We therefore welcome the setting up of *Transport for the North* (TfN) and will work with interested parties and sectors, seeking their support for the long-term reinstatement and for its funding to be added to the proposals to be considered by TfN and Network Rail. Encouraged by our meeting with the Rail Minister, the 2005 feasibility study will need to be updated to confirm the validity of its favourable benefit/cost ratio and to revise its costings.

A first step will therefore be to make an approach to the two Local Enterprise Partnerships covering East Yorkshire for funding for a revised study of the proposed reinstatement.

David Pennie ([d.a.pennie@hull.ac.uk](mailto:d.a.pennie@hull.ac.uk))  
on behalf of the Minsters Rail Campaign

*Revised 16 March 2017*

