

Members of the Crossrail Working Group

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Cllr John Cole – Elected Member

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Chair's Foreword

It has been a pleasure Chairing the Working Group, I would like to personally thank all our contributors for giving freely of their time, expertise, opinions and ideas.

I am heartened by people's genuine desire to be part of the group and contribute to the debate on Cross Rail, the professional attitude of all involved, what ever their position on the linking of the two railway lines, is to be commended.

Early on in our deliberations it became clear that rail has an important role to play in regeneration, regeneration of our great city Bradford, the wider city region and Yorkshire in general.

It was very much apparent that for a significant length of time the region has not attracted its fair share of national funding and in my opinion has not had the impetus, drive or ambition to deliver the improvements like we see now happening over the pennines in Greater Manchester for example.

I would conjecture that without a 21st century transport network of quality rail, road and air connections then we will as a city and a region always be at a disadvantage to other regions that are better connected.

I would implore councils, councillors, MP's transport bodies, business, interest groups, governmental organisations and communities in Yorkshire, the city region and Bradford all to improved their game and started batting their weight for our fair share of funding, otherwise we all will be left in a siding.

Councillor David Heseltine

Chair, Crossrail Working Group

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

Crossrail was the subject of a report that was presented to the Regeneration and Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2011.

At that meeting a report was presented by John Blackburn (Assistant Director Transportation & Highways, Bradford Council) and David Hoggarth (Director - Development Metro (West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive)).

The report provided information on the outcome of initial investigations into the proposals for a cross rail link, and recommended that the Committee considered the issues raised.

During the debate it became clear that Members required further information on certain issues and required clarity on several points.

At the meeting the committee passed the following resolution:-

Resolved:

That a time limited working group be established to explore some of the issues raised in the debate and that members of the working group include Councillors Azam, Cole and Heseltine and that the group is able to invite other interested parties to meetings.

The Scrutiny Process

It was agreed that Cllr Heseltine would chair the Working Group, and the Overview and Scrutiny Lead worked closely with Cllr Heseltine to facilitate meetings and information gathering.

Several members of the public who attended the meeting expressed an interest in being part of the working group.

The group held its first meeting on 7 March 2011, and membership comprised:- Cllr David Heseltine (Ch), Cllr John Cole, Cllr Nazam Azam, Cllr John Pennington, Peter Allen, Sara Clarke, Alan Hall, John Pashley, James Vasey.

The Working Group held two further meetings on 27 April and 19 July 2011.

The overall aim of the working group was:

To explore the issues raised at the Committee meeting of 3rd February 2011, and to identify how feasible a Crossrail link in the district would be, with a view to making recommendations to the full Regeneration & Economy Scrutiny Committee on its findings.

Chapter 2 – Findings and Recommendations

This report presents the findings and conclusions the working group has made as a result of its discussions and research. It also makes a number of recommendations for action by the Council.

Finance

Whilst engineers have confirmed a link was technically possible and deliverable, Crossrail remains an expensive rail project. The main stumbling block for cross rail was the issue of funding. It is unlikely that funding will be found for a scheme of this size, and even if money was available, Crossrail is not necessarily the best way to achieve value for money.

The Working Group focussed on Crossrail not as a rail project, but as a “regeneration project involving rail.” However, Mike Cowlam (Assistant Director Economic Development & Property) felt that in his view it is unlikely that this would be seen as a regeneration project as it clearly involves the provision of transport infrastructure. If a bid was to be made through regeneration channels then the only suitable fund would be the Regional Growth Fund. This fund is heavily oversubscribed and Bradford could not reasonably expect to secure funding of the scale required to deliver this project.

It was clear that amongst the Working Group there was a passion for a Crossrail link in the City, and it would be fair to say that members of the group had differing views as to the viability of the scheme.

One thing was certain, that the opportunity to create a cross city link did not occur very often. The opportunity was there now, but would not be there again for at least another 50 years.

The figure quoted for the scheme of £140million is said to be a conservative estimate, as the figure for the refurbishment of Leeds Station would cost £245million (which didn't include land purchases) whilst Sheffield stations cosmetic improvements had cost £78million.

In respect of any Crossrail link it was important to do a cost benefit analysis. An estimation of the economic benefit would only be around £25,000 a year with the train company making £615,000 per year if 600 passengers bought a metro card.

Although there would be some economic benefits arising from the scheme these are extremely unlikely to be of a scale to offer sufficient contributions in addition to the transport benefits to provide the high positive benefit to cost ratio required by the Department for Transport (schemes are not generally supported unless they offer at least a 2:1 benefit to cost ratio and most supported schemes exceed this by some margin).

Further, more detailed, investigations into the feasibility of providing a Crossrail link could be undertaken. This is likely to require the commissioning of work from Network Rail, Northern Rail and possibly specialist rail consultants as well as significant input from Council and Metro officers. Although it is not possible to put a specific cost on this work, it is likely to be considerable and possibly in the order of £100,000 due to its complexity.

However, initial investigations have indicated that a Crossrail link is unlikely to be supported by the Department for Transport and it would use resources that are required for other transport projects including building a strong case for Department for Transport investment in the Caldervale line and a new station at Manningham which is considered would bring greater economic and transport benefits in relation to cost than Crossrail.

The Council's transport regeneration priorities

A discussion on the cross rail link was held at the Regeneration Transport Summit in July 2010.

From that discussion it became clear that a Crossrail link for the City does not feature in the Council's regeneration priorities.

The main findings of the workshop were as follows:

- The Leeds City Region Transport Strategy has indicated that rail priorities for the District should include improved rolling stock, the electrification of the Caldervale line and new stations at Low Moor, Apperley Bridge and, at a later stage, Manningham;
- The Route Utilisation Strategy for Yorkshire & the Humber, which is the key rail strategic planning document for the region, does not consider that a Bradford Cross Rail scheme is necessary to satisfy an existing or likely future rail demand in the next 20 years. This is supported further by the draft Northern Route Utilisation Strategy published in October 2010;
- The high cost of the proposal (£140m minimum + land costs + changes to wider rail network required) is unlikely to be met in full or in major part from Department for Transport as a cost benefit assessment is likely to reveal poor value for money in transport terms;
- Improvements are needed to both stations and to the public realm link between them and it is suggested that this should be the focus of investment.
- Significantly more work would be required to determine if the proposed station can be accommodated within the proposed site or at an alternative location and what wider changes to rail infrastructure would be needed;

Westfield

There was a feeling amongst some Working Group members that the Westfield development would not proceed, and that Crossrail was ideally placed to "fill the gap". This was based on the fact that Westfield were not proceeding in Guildford and Derby and had sold its interest in the Broadmarsh development in Nottingham. However, the Council has opened negotiations with Westfield with a view to the scheme proceeding.

There was a suggestion that in order to keep any Crossrail project viable, effort should be made to attempt to protect the land from being built on.

Recommendation 1

That the Strategic Director – Regeneration, explore the possibility of legally protecting the necessary land, in order to preserve the possibility of a Crossrail scheme being developed in the future.

Leeds City Region

A major issue for concern was that the fact that Leeds City region had not made the case for rail development as strongly as others, such as Manchester. It would appear that the business community don't appear to have lobbied for investment.

It is important to get investment in order to make the Leeds City region competitive. Connectivity within the region must be enhanced, and it is important to have a link from Bradford to Leeds / Bradford airport.

All successful cities have got quality rail networks, and Bradford needs to be a major player in the Leeds City Region.

Recommendation 2

That the Strategic Director – Regeneration, presents a report to a meeting of the Regeneration and Economy O&S Committee, detailing

- (i) the work carried out with the business community in lobbying for investment in rail within the District, and how this effort can be strengthened.
- (i) How Bradford can increase its position in the Leeds City Region

High Speed 2

Bradford must have a link to the new electrified High Speed (HS2) service to Leeds from London. The Council should prioritise ensuring there is a connection from Bradford to the nearest station on the new link.

The Working Group also had concerns about Bradford Interchange which must be coming to the end of its life expectancy and would need extensive repairs. The Interchange is currently undergoing £200,000 of improvements which include the provision of a new waiting room and improved seating, lighting and heating at the station. However, there are no plans or funds identified to improve Forster Square station in the period 2011-14.

Recommendation 3

That the Strategic Director Regeneration be requested

- (i) to work with Metro to secure improvements to Forster Square Station.
- (ii) to make improvements to the walk between both City Centre stations.

Recommendation 4

That the Strategic Director Regeneration be requested to lobby Government? To ensure that there is a link from Bradford to the nearest station on High Speed 2.

Rail Operators

Rail operators were invited to attend the meeting held on 27 April 2011. Three operators were invited: - Grand Central, Northern Rail and East Coast trains. The meeting was also attended by Nigel Forster Managing Director of Ove Arup.

Tom Clift – Managing Director Grand Central

Tom told members of the group that his company want to get from Bradford to London in the quickest time. Their priority would be to ensure that all the track from Bradford to Doncaster to be fit for high speed or faster route. The section from Wakefield to Doncaster was particularly slow.

He felt it could be argued that there are other things to do with the rail network that could give a greater benefit to the district over a shorter period of time.

He suggested that stations could be made more attractive, and parking improved. Bradford Interchange has a car park underneath with 60 spaces.

If a Crossrail link was created, Grand Central would use it for their trains.

Drew Haley – Client Stakeholder Manager Northern Rail

Unfortunately Drew Haley was unable to attend the meeting. However, he stated that he met with in May 2010 he met with Council officers to discuss the impacts that a new link between Forster Square and Bradford Interchange would have on Northern Rail, and his comments still stood.

In brief Northern Rail (who operate 99% of the train services into Bradford) would be very supportive of a cross rail link, although they would probably not use it to provide through services (across Bradford) unless the Caldervale line was electrified.

He felt that the cheapest and easiest option would be to expand Bradford Interchange rather than provide a new central station. This would allow services to connect with one another via bay platforms at the Interchange, does not require the electrification of the Caldervale line, does not require an expensive recast of rail timetables, would require little if any new rolling stock and provides better connectivity for Aire Valley rail services with the bus station. The link could be provided with a single track which would further reduce costs and still allow 4 trains an hour (passive provision would safeguard future expansion).

Northern rail would have to look into the merits of providing rail services between the Aire Valley and Halifax and Manchester as it is not clear what the demand would be. Current service patterns are well established and they are not sure what the benefits would be in changing these especially if it results in extended journey times and recasting the timetables elsewhere for existing passengers.

Northern rail's future proposals are for the Airedale Line to provide longer trains (6 car instead of the present 4 car) rather than increase service frequency, and for the Caldervale Line will have increased services in the peak time to Halifax and Bradford. However, capacity issues at Leeds rail station constrain providing additional services.

Drew stated that one of the most important drivers of the electrification of the Airedale and Wharfedale was cross party support from the regions MPs, and added that this is very important for the cross rail link due to the envisaged costs of the scheme.