

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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***Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)***

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National Infrastructure Commission  
 Finlaison House  
 15-17 Furnival Street  
 London  
 EC4A 1AB

14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Commission Secretariat,

**National Infrastructure Commission – Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North, Interim Report**

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in NW England. We are pleased to give our views as follows to this interim report on methodology, in respect of our region.

**Question 1 Please provide specific sources for evidence that the Commission could use in estimating costs and the impact of proposals on journey time and capacity.**

One of our chief considerations in our initial response to the consultation was the need to bring progressive electrification back on the agenda. We would again commend the 2015 “Northern Sparks” report (the North of England Electrification Task Force) as a sound basis for evidence of the high potential of electrification to improve journey times and capacity.

**Question 2: Given the evidence for how transport impacts growth and competitiveness, is assessing against the Commission’s proposed criteria of productivity, connectivity, and unlocking investment in land around stations a reasonable approach to estimating the impacts of proposed rail investments? Please provide links to any specific sources of evidence you think that the Commission should use to support this methodology.**

From a passenger point of view, land around stations should primarily be used to support passengers and integration with other transport modes. Also, as we

commented in our original response, whilst integration with other public transport modes is very important, it should be recognised that the private car will probably continue to be more attractive than connecting buses to rail stations for many people. The challenge will be to bring about a step change in the provision of parking space at the many totally inadequate current station locations. With more trains and more passengers this vital issue becomes increasingly exacerbated. In addition, accessibility at many stations is poor or non-existent for those with limited mobility. This should be a priority.

**Question 3: Given the evidence for how transport impacts sustainability and quality of life, is assessing against the Commission's proposed criteria of amenity benefits, impact of rail freight, natural capital, and lifecycle carbon emissions, a reasonable approach to estimating the sustainability and quality of life impacts of proposed rail investments? Please provide links to any specific sources of evidence you think that the Commission should use to support this methodology.**

This appears to be a reasonable approach.

**Question 4: Do you agree with the Commission's proposed approach to uncertainty?**

Firstly we welcome the statement in the interim report just preceding this topic that the research will assess what level of disruption passengers are prepared to accept for the faster delivery of improvements and whether any mitigations, such as replacing services with slower direct trains rather than buses, might make disruption more acceptable. There is a lot of evidence that maintaining (diverted) train services is much more palatable for passengers.

We agree with the proposed approach to uncertainty. As we have said in our submission there is much uncertainty for the post Covid 19 world and it is difficult to estimate what the level of patronage will be over the next 1 to 3 years. There may be a shift towards greater reliance on private cars as people reflect a reluctance to enter crowded conditions. However for environmental and other reasons rail transport should now be encouraged and solutions must be provided in incremental ways, and over the next few years.

Thank you for the opportunity for further comment

Yours faithfully,

*John A Moorhouse*

John Moorhouse  
Company Secretary