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Dear Consultee

Tyne Valley Line: consultation on community rail designation

We propose to designate the Tyne Valley Line (Newcastle – Hexham – Carlisle) as a community rail service. This proposal is in line with the Department's Community Rail Development Strategy.

Designation is intended to improve the financial performance, value for money and social value of the railways to help make sure of their long term future. Separate designation gives us the freedom and flexibility to try a new approach to achieve these aims. It also provides access to small scale additional funding.

We attach a route prospectus, outlining the scope for development, including locally agreed objectives. Designation will help make this possible and to build on the excellent work of the Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership (CRP).

We would be pleased to get your views and comments on the proposed designation and all responses will be considered before the final decision is made.

Further copies of the documents are available from this address, and further information can also be viewed under [Community Rail](#) in the rail section of the [Department for Transport's website](#).

As the Community Rail Development Strategy was widely consulted on, this is a short consultation involving key local and rail industry stakeholders. I would be grateful if you could respond in writing by **Friday, 5th September 2014**.

If you would prefer a hard copy of this documentation, please contact me and I will send it by post. We are happy to have your response by e-mail sent to simon.hankin@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for your interest.

Yours faithfully



Simon Hankin
Community Rail Development

List of Consultees

Northern Rail
East Coast
First ScotRail
DB Schenker
Direct Rail Services
Freightliner Ltd
GB Railfreight Ltd
Network Rail
Office of Rail Regulation
Passenger Focus

Association of Community Rail Partnerships
Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland National Park Authority
Cumbria County Council
Nexus (Tyne & Wear PTE)
Tyne Valley Rail Users Group
Intu Metrocentre
Parish/town councils in the vicinity

Community Rail Designation: Tyne Valley Line (Newcastle-Hexham-Carlisle) local service

Route Prospectus

For the Service Designation for the Newcastle-Hexham-Carlisle route

Introduction

The Tyne Valley line runs for 62 miles between two regional centres (Newcastle-Carlisle) passing through inner city areas, a major out-of-town shopping centre, suburbia, semi-rural commuter belt, market towns and highly rural villages.

In 2013, the Tyne Valley line celebrated its 175 year anniversary making it the oldest cross country passenger line in the UK. The line forms a major rail link to the North Pennines AONB, Northumberland National Park and the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

As such the line serves a diverse variety of markets and communities; according to official ORR statistics there were 1,311,772 journeys made from stations on the line (in 2011/12). It is estimated that the population within a 30 minute travelling time of a station on the line is in excess of 1.5 million.

Services

The train service between Newcastle and Carlisle is broadly hourly. Some westbound trains extend beyond Carlisle to destinations in Scotland (Dumfries, Kilmarnock and Glasgow Central) or West Cumbria (Whitehaven). Trains at Carlisle also link to the Settle to Carlisle line. There is a separate hourly local service between Hexham and Newcastle which, when combined with the Carlisle service, provides a broadly half-hourly service at Hexham and Prudhoe.

Three services (each way Mon-Sat) are provided by Scotrail and these include peak trains at each end of the line. The Scotrail rolling stock are crewed by Northern staff for services east of Carlisle.

The lines carry school pupils travelling in from stations west of Hexham attend Newcastle schools. There is also school traffic using the line from Haltwhistle and Brampton via Carlisle.

Most services starting at Hexham run through to Sunderland and Middlesbrough and also to Nunthorpe.

The Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership

The Tyne Valley Line is part of the Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership (TVCRP).

The inaugural meeting of prospective partners took place on 2 April 2003 and the partnership was incorporated formally as a company limited by guarantee on 19 May 2005. The initial action plan focussed on various ways of promoting existing rail services, for example by mounting boards in the settlements served by stations giving train times. Similar boards on the stations gave information on local attractions and amenities. The partnership has run programmes of event trains during the summer months, and for a few years ran Santa Specials in the run up to Christmas.

Notable achievements of the partnership include opening a kiosk at Hexham station (in collaboration with Mencap's Dilston College) which serves hot drinks and snacks, co-sponsoring a study of the line which led to changes in stopping patterns of trains, and celebrating the 175th anniversary of the line. The latter was supported by Beamish Museum and attracted wide media coverage.

The CRP maintains a website at <http://www.tvcrp.org.uk/>.

The core funding partners are: Northern Rail and East Coast TOCs, Northumberland County Council.

Other key partners include: Cumbria County Council, Nexus (Tyne & Wear PTE), Northumberland National Park Authority, various Parish and Town councils along the Tyne Valley, and the Tyne Valley Rail Users Group (TVRUG).

The Tyne Valley Rail Users Group (TVRUG)

The Tyne Valley Line Rail Users' Group was formed in March 2000 with the twin aims of improving the service offered to passengers along the line and encouraging an increase in rail travel.

The membership comprises regular rail users, some occasional users, potential users and others organisations, such as Parish Councils, who are representing on behalf of their communities. Annual membership is £5 and the group maintains their own website at <http://www.tvrug.org.uk/>.

In conjunction with the Tyne Valley CRP, TVRUG lobbies the train operating company (Northern Rail), the Department for Transport, Passenger Focus, Northumberland and Cumbria County Councils, on all rail-related transport issues.

Route Prospectus

This prospectus aims to set out ideas for the development of the TV line using service designation to facilitate improved outputs for both the railway and particularly the communities and industries served by the railway.

The TVCRP seek service designation for the whole line (excepting Newcastle and Carlisle stations), which excludes the track and signalling, which is used if there are other services such as freight sharing the line or when the line is part of a 'Trans European Network' (TEN) route, as is the case of the TV line.

Key Aspirations of Service Designation

In the short-to-medium term, we are seeking the following:

1) Improved station environments and accessibility. To continually improve station environments and facilities (e.g. installation of Digital Passenger Information Displays at all stations, enhanced shelter capacity at Prudhoe) and eliminate existing access issues for Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRMs) to one of the platforms at both Blaydon and Corbridge stations (the latter is currently being assessed through a wider planning application.) Hexham station is currently undergoing improvement works which will enable full PRM access to both platforms.

2) Increased community involvement. Encourage further community involvement with the local railway through station partnerships and attracting local funding. There has already been such community investment at Stocksfield and Prudhoe stations.

3) A significant increase of, and improvement in, rolling stock allocation. Electrification across other parts of the Northern Rail network will create potential opportunities to cascade more modern diesel rolling stock to the North East, thus helping establish a business case for greater investment in rolling stock to eliminate overcrowding and improve service resilience on the TV line.

Longer Term Aspirations

1) Increased capacity west of Hexham leading to increased service frequencies. Despite the existing service being half-hourly at Hexham and Prudhoe, generally hourly at most other stations on the line, the CRP believe that an improved level of service (say to three trains per hour, or even four on the busiest sections) would make the services more attractive and bring a significant improvement to the green travel agenda along the entirety of the A69 corridor.

2) Reopening the station at Gilsland. A reopened station at Gilsland would greatly improve connectivity and open up new opportunities for some of the most rural and isolated communities in England. In addition, a new station would make a significant improvement to tourism accessibility to parts of Hadrian's Wall, greatly strengthening the business case for the proposed reopening.

A community campaign group, "Campaign to Open Gilsland Station" (COGS) was established in 2013.

Key Measures of Success

- Increased community involvement
- Increased ridership and revenue
- Improved train service, in terms of frequency and quality of rolling stock

Stations Included in the Designation

The following stations would be included in the designation:

Dunston, MetroCentre, Blaydon, Wylam, Prudhoe, Stocksfield, Riding Mill, Corbridge, Hexham, Haydon Bridge, Bardon Mill, Haltwhistle, Brampton (Cumbria), Wetheral .

Newcastle and Carlisle are out of scope for the proposed service designation.

Freight

Service designation of the route would not preclude investment in the future to support economic development, nor would it hinder the existing use of the railway as a freight line or diversionary route (typically when the Newcastle-Edinburgh section of the ECML is undergoing engineering works). Designation of services is intended to be a permanent arrangement, but can be reviewed periodically to assess whether designation is still appropriate.

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