

The North's Rail Freight Network

The North of England has an extensive rail network ranging from faster main lines to rural branch lines and freight-only lines into and out of ports for example.

The main north-south rail routes include:

- West Coast Main Line (WCML) from Scotland / Liverpool and Manchester to London Euston through the North of England via Crewe;
- East Coast Main Line (ECML) from Scotland / Newcastle / Leeds / Middlesbrough / Hull / York / Darlington to London Kings Cross through the North of England via Doncaster; and
- Midland Main Line (MML) from Sheffield to London St Pancras.

There are also a number of other routes throughout the North of England which are used for the movement of freight. There are others which have the capability but lack capacity or space needed to fit additional trains on. The current routes used include:

- Diggle Route from Manchester to Leeds via Stalybridge and Huddersfield;
- Calder Valley Route from Manchester to Leeds via Rochdale, Halifax and Bradford;
- Hope Valley Route from Manchester to Sheffield via Marple and Chinley
- Leeds to Carnforth via Wennington;
- Leeds to Carlisle via Settle and Appleby;
- Blackburn, Hellifield, to Carlisle via Settle and Appleby;
- Chat Moss Route from Liverpool to Manchester via St Helens and Newton-le-Willows;
- CLC route from Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington;
- Cumbrian Coast Line from Carlisle to Barrow-In-Furness and Lancaster via Workington and Whitehaven;
- Durham Coast Line from Newcastle to Middlesbrough via Sunderland and Hartlepool;
- Tees Valley Line from Saltburn via Darlington to Middlesbrough and Redcar; and
- Cleethorpes line from Cleethorpes to the Doncaster via Grimsby, Immingham and Scunthorpe.

Rail issues

Network capacity is the key issue for rail. It is a challenge in terms of the capacity of the network to accommodate either more trains reliably or flexibility around where the trains travel to or from and in terms of gauge

which drives the ability to handle intermodal traffic both on the existing network and for new journeys. Robust timetables are also needed for freight certainty so the network works as a whole system rather than disjointed.

Evidence gathered for this report suggests that just less than half freight paths are used in total, however that is not the case on routes or at times where capacity is constrained, for example, on the Castlefield corridor in Manchester. There is little or no spare capacity over the four key freight bottlenecks identified by the network capacity modelling for this report - other than at night. These include the WCML north of Golborne, ECML two track section through Durham, Midland Mainline through Sheffield and across Manchester. The work has showed that rail freight end to end train times already suffer from significant additional time in order to be squeezed onto the network.

Manchester Taskforce

There is a particular problem in the Manchester area, where all the former main freight lines that avoided the city centre have been closed. That has left most freight trains having to go through the city centre, either through Victoria or along the Castlefield corridor through Piccadilly and Oxford Road which is the only route to the Trafford Park freight terminal. However, the whole network in central Manchester is severely congested which causes extremely high levels of delays to train services, giving Manchester 20% of the locations with the worst train delays in Britain. As a result, Network Rail has formally designated the Castlefield corridor as 'Congested Infrastructure', one of only 3 locations in Britain to have been so designated.

TfN is working with DfT and Network Rail to identify what enhancements are needed to rail infrastructure in and around Manchester to enable services to operate reliably and to cater for future growth. That work is focussed on passenger services, though freight services would also benefit from any reduction in delays on the network. In addition, TfN is working on a Network Gaps Delivery Plan to set out priorities for new or re-instated sections of line in the North, as part of which consideration is being given to possibilities in south Manchester that could enable freight trains to access Trafford Park without having to go through central Manchester.