



# JOINING UP THE DOTS

In the last of this year's series of Property Leaders' Forums, Insider looked at transport connectivity between our towns, cities and employment centres

## THE PANEL

### STANDING

- John Bowes** divisional director for transport and infrastructure, Mott MacDonald
- Damian Kilburn** trustee, Institution of Civil Engineers
- David Budd** assistant director for transport, Sheffield City Region
- Peter Garrett** managing director, Keyland Developments
- Ben Still** managing director, West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Ben Hall** regional senior director, GVA
- Nigel Foster** chairman, Leeds Transport Investment Panel
- Charles Johnson** head of planning development, Leeds Bradford Airport

### SEATED

- Antony Hall** studio director, Carey Jones Chapman Tolcher
- John Brooks** director, Indigo Planning
- Andrew Latchmore** commercial property partner, Shulmans
- Julian Jackson** assistant director for planning, transportation and highways, Bradford Council

**B**en Still set the scene for the timeframe for anticipated major rail projects across the region, saying that HS2 will soon be making decisions about the land take required along the line of the planned route. "We are waiting to hear what Transport for the North (TfN) says about the network across the north," he said. "Certainly, in my career in transport and economic development, this is the first time we have had this kind of opportunity to really think boldly about transformational infrastructure in the north of England, so we won't let it slip through our fingers."

Current rail journey times and connectivity between Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester are pretty poor, he added, noting that 55 minutes from Leeds to Manchester is "appalling".



Antony Hall

One of the combined authority's priorities is how to get from an HS2/Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) hub in Leeds to the rest of the city region. "Transport takes a painfully long time and we are trying as best we can to deliver it faster," Still said. "Part of that is about having a clear vision."

"Some of the stuff we're doing that is the hardest doesn't sound very exciting, but it is really important. We are trying to get the government to build in compatibility and the needs of a future system that it itself has not yet committed to. The statement that the Chancellor made about allowing these touchpoints securing land on the HS2 route is so critical and will require a lot more effort to keep in play – they are basically saying, I think for the first time, that we will safeguard this bit of land for a network that we have yet to commit to, and it is almost impossible to get governments to do that."

John Brooks asked why it would be 20 years before NPR opened. Nigel Foster, former strategy director at sub-regional transport body TfN, said: "Bluntly, it simply does take an awful long time to do some of these things – partly our planning system, partly governments and the way they approach strategic infrastructure."

Mott MacDonald worked on the southern entrance to Leeds station, opened last year. Its divisional director John Bowes said there is a lot more excitement now about the South Bank of Leeds, with increased interest in the land parcels. He noted that the now

# CLEANER CONNECTED CITIES

**John Bowes**  
Divisional Director  
Mott MacDonald



Transport links between our cities are overstretched today: imagine what the situation will be like in 30 years if we don't act now!

Successful cities provide opportunities and amenities that increase innovation, entrepreneurship, jobs and economic vitality. But they must make use of intelligent transport solutions to meet current needs and anticipate new ones, recognise the potential of emerging technologies and test the validity of conventional responses.

Safe, smart, well-integrated transport enables ease of movement, cuts congestion and puts employment, education, healthcare and recreation within easy reach. Rail networks and mass rapid transit systems can drive economic growth and urban regeneration. Good planning encourages walking and cycling, increasing health benefits while cutting noise and air-quality impacts.

Transport for the North's vision to significantly improve connectivity between northern cities goes a long way to improving gross value added (GVA). We're proud to be supporting this vision through Northern Power House projects, including the Leeds South Bank infrastructure development plan.

Mott MacDonald has also devised a new standard for managing capital and operational carbon in infrastructure – PAS 2080 – and have produced guidance explaining how to use and benefit from it. And we're working with clients to review specifications and identify changes that allow more-sustainable recycled or low carbon materials to be used without affecting performance. We've already used PAS 2080 to great effect on the multi award-winning Great Yorkshire Way highway scheme linking the M18 to Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

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Ben Hall



scrapped NGT trolleybus scheme's southern route had a much better benefit-cost ratio than the northern route because all of the opportunity for development was in the south.

"My concern with the plans for Leeds station would be who funds it, because HS2 won't pay for everything," Bowes said. "They will only pay for what they impact on – the absolute minimum. I have also found that the Department for Transport (DfT) won't put its hand in its pocket to find the extra. So it's hoped that the city regions find the money."

The financing has to be done in stages, Bowes added. He praised plans for a Parkway station for Leeds Bradford Airport because it has not been overambitious but still delivers important benefits such as a park and ride facility into Leeds.

Antony Hall said: "What strikes us from an architectural perspective and what developers and investors tell us is that they want

some certainty about how and when it all comes forward. It's great to hear what you are saying but they need to know how their investment is going to fall within the region."

One of the encouraging things about the redevelopment of Leeds station, Andrew Latchmore said, is that there is a phased plan to start work at City Square end and a realisation that the whole scheme can't be delivered through to the South Bank until HS2 is more of a reality. "But if they don't start at the top soon, they will never succeed in doing it in time. It's a matter of attracting investment in packages."

Sheffield's HS2 station is destined for the city centre – a loop that rejoins the line further north. The Sheffield City Region's David Budd asked Still what West Yorkshire's experience was in dealing with HS2, pointing out that getting some partners to the table can be challenging.

Still said: "Generally, we've engaged with HS2 and it's engaged with us. By agreeing what we want up front, we've agreed the Leeds station strategy, which is very positive. HS2 tends to use us as an example of how it wants to go forward. But when push comes to shove, HS2 will work as an independent unit."

Still said the combined authority wasn't given any warning that HS2 wanted a depot at the Gateway 45 enterprise zone site. "We found out about that at the same time as everybody else. We were just about to enter into an agreement with a company about that

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site, so that wasn't great. A lot depends on the people. We have had some very good HS2 people. "

Foster said Leeds is giving confidence to the investment market and to businesses who might want to be based there. The Sheffield City Region can do the same if it demonstrates that its policies are aligned with what HS2 is trying to achieve. There may be some catching up for Sheffield to do in building relations, Latchmore said. A single voice from the council and business community for Leeds helped it put its case across.

A single voice for Yorkshire, rather than West and South Yorkshire, would be preferable, Peter Garrett said. "If we are talking about connectivity and we can't connect up the areas within Yorkshire then what hope do we have of connecting up with the outside?"

"Developers like certainty and not surprises. We did the park-and-ride at Temple Green and sold our joint venture. Our joint venture partner bought it with the intention of building out the scheme and building sheds on there and now that's where the HS2 depot is going. If you were the developer holding that, where you have had government backing to get it to that point, and your plans are scuppered, it's a sorry state of affairs. It was like it landed from the moon. Whereas if it had been brought along as part of a scheme, it would have been an even better scheme."

Bradford council has been vocal in the need for the city to be on any NPR line. Julian Jackson, its assistant director for planning, transportation and highways, said having the support of business has made a major difference. "We had a meeting with John Cridland (chairman of TfN) and said that, from a business perspective, eight minutes to Leeds, 20 minutes to Manchester and 30 to Manchester Airport is when it begins to have resonance, not just with TfN but with government partners as well.

"For Bradford, NPR is a once-in-a-lifetime



Charles Johnson



Ben Still

opportunity. It's the biggest city in the UK on a branch line."

Damian Kilburn said there's no point having an HS2 station and then thinking afterwards about how to connect main lines to it. "HS2 and HS3 are a long way off, but if everything is built around that being the final destination, the schemes will be justifiable as connectivity packages and then people will be committed to that way of thinking."

Foster said the £174m package available after the demise of NGT would fund new railway stations at Leeds Bradford Airport, Thorpe Park and White Rose Shopping Centre. "All have been built to accommodate NPR or HS2 when they come along. That sounds obvious, but it is relatively revolutionary and definitely in the case of a DfT approach to it."

To attract investors around transport hubs, infrastructure needs to be in place or imminent, GVA's Ben Hall said: "To attract investors, they need to see it delivered. If we look at occupiers who drive cash flows, they are making decisions on where they are taking space. In terms of a timeline for making decisions, it is quite tangible – we have to see it. Once these things have been implemented I think the economic benefits will come quickly. There is another type of investor who is more long-term and will say,



Peter Garrett



Nigel Foster

'I will come to a city or region and look at something over a ten or 15-year period.' What we need to get right for those investors is what the opportunity is. They have to see where the return is."

Latchmore agreed: "Having the plans is essential and a really good step in the right direction. I think it is really good news that for the first time we have a true strategic transport authority for the north looking at these bigger questions of connectivity. You see authorities like Bradford and Leeds working together and both seeing a rail link. Leeds aren't doing that out of pure altruism. They are doing it through self-interest because they have a rapidly growing labour market and a desperate shortage of people to put into it. We desperately need to be able to link into the workforce of a city like Bradford."

TfN proposals for central Pennines east-west connectivity as well as plans to connect the M606 into the north-west quadrant of Leeds and to the airport are critical, Charles Johnson said. "They have a motorway which goes virtually all of the way there and it's not massively beyond the wit of man to get that connectivity," he said. "If TfN can concentrate on that east-west connectivity and link that into strategic hubs, all that has to be thought about together. The airport has a new owner with big growth ambitions. This winter we are doing some works but next winter we will do some fairly big changes to the terminal building on how we can improve capacity."

Budd said there are real opportunities in the north around airport expansion given the limited ability to expand airports in the South-East and that the DfT is starting to consult on a national aviation strategy. "The wider economic benefits that could develop from agglomeration benefits of the airport expansion at Leeds Bradford – and the potential for Doncaster Sheffield Airport given the length of its runway – is a real strength that, as a region speaking collectively, we can use."