



# Response to the Department for Transport East Coast franchise specification consultation

## From Shaping Norfolk's Future

### **1 Introduction**

Shaping Norfolk's Future is the economic development partnership for Norfolk.

The partnership, which is chaired by Mark Hodges, chief executive of Aviva UK, is supported by all the local authorities in Norfolk, the East of England Development Agency, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, leading businesses and other key public sector partners.

The partnership's role is to improve the economic performance of the county.

One of the partnership's strategic goals is to develop an infrastructure that supports sustainable economic growth whilst maintaining the quality of the county's environment and heritage.

Developing a modern rail network for Norfolk is a key priority under this strategic goal.

### **2 East Coast Mainline**

Norfolk suffers from poor transport connectivity, particularly road links connecting Norfolk with the Midlands and the North.

However the county is fortunate in possessing direct rail links from Norwich through to Peterborough, Nottingham, Sheffield and the North West.

Whilst the services could be improved, with greater speed, reliability and capacity, the route is crucial in providing connectivity into and out of Norfolk.

Peterborough station is the key junction between the cross-country services from Norfolk to the Midlands and North West and the East Coast Mainline. Passengers from Norwich, Thetford, Ipswich and Cambridge all have to change at Peterborough to head to Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland. Conversely passengers from the north change at Peterborough to access Norfolk and Suffolk.

In order to encourage travel by train, intra-regional connections from ECML to cross-country routes need to be enhanced, not reduced.

Low frequency of services and poor connections are limiting passenger numbers and encouraging people to travel by car.

SNF recommends that the franchise specification includes the need to better coordinate East Coast services with connecting regional services at Peterborough.

### **3 Eureka consultation**

Shaping Norfolk's Future is particularly concerned at the proposals contained within the Eureka consultation to reduce the frequency of direct services from Peterborough to the North East and Scotland.

Of particular concern are plans to:

- (1) Limit Peterborough to Leeds direct service to one per hour, resulting in nine fewer trains than today.
- (2) Limit Peterborough to Edinburgh direct services to six trains per day (seven in the other direction).
- (3) Slow down journeys between Peterborough and York, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

The direct impact of these changes will mean passengers travelling from Norwich to York will face a wait of more than 50 minutes at Peterborough station.

Aviva, the UK's largest insurance company, whose two main operating centres are Norwich and York, says it will be directly hit by the changes. It is proposing to hire coaches and no longer use the train as the journey time will not be competitive.

The reduction of direct services to and from Peterborough to destinations further north will reduce the attractiveness of rail to and from the entire East of England region, thus encouraging a modal shift to cars, coaches or air.

We strongly urge the DfT to reject the current Eureka proposals and support the retention and enhancement of services to the North and Scotland from Peterborough.

East-West connections are poor compared with north-south flows, and the Eureka proposals will only make matters worse.

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