

Fast Track East Coast

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR
United Kingdom

Dear Secretary of State,

This letter brings together both businesses and local leaders in the North East. We are writing to you united to make the urgent case for investment in the East Coast Main Line to ensure that our region can be part of the 'High Speed North' rail network.

Investment in the East Coast Main Line between Northallerton and Berwick needs to be made over the period 2024-34. This can be achieved through the reinstatement of the disused Leamside Line coupled with upgrades for the existing East Coast Main Line, including between Northallerton and Norton and improvements to Darlington station.

For High Speed North to succeed the East Coast Main Line between Northallerton and Berwick must be upgraded. Both HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail trains are set to join the East Coast Main Line outside of York to connect to Darlington, Durham and Newcastle. As the line can barely cope with the current number of trains, we urgently need investment in the East Coast Main Line to ensure that these major projects will be able to reach the North East and bring economic benefits to our communities.

Fortunately, reinstating the Leamside line, along with upgrades to the line between Northallerton and Norton, could be delivered relatively quickly because unlike new build it does not need new legislation or the purchase of land. Better still, creating a new parallel track to the East Coast Main Line would improve rail journeys for thousands of existing passengers each day, and its economic impact would be felt across England and Scotland. This offers an early opportunity for the Government to show its commitment to 'level up' the UK's economy.

Stakeholders in our region have been active participants in a long-term planning study recently undertaken by Network Rail on this stretch of line. The emerging conclusions recognise the need for significant investment to meet future demand. The reinstatement of the Leamside Line coupled with upgrades of the existing East Coast Main Line, including Northallerton to Norton, will mean that the route will be able to cope with demand and help to drive economic growth for the region.

The North East is heavily reliant on the East Coast Main Line. Berwick, Morpeth, Newcastle, Durham and Darlington are all served by the East Coast Main Line. The route provides vital connections to Scotland, the rest of the North, the Midlands and London as well as allowing businesses to move their goods by freight to our region's ports.

Central to our region's ambitions is the urgent need to improve the East Coast Main Line to allow for reliable connections to the North East. The line is currently unreliable due to there being only one-track north and one-track south between Northallerton and Berwick. This track is being used by

local, long distance and freight trains, there simply isn't enough space for the connections the region needs.

These capacity issues are causing delays with passenger services stuck behind slow moving freight trains and disruption leaving the North East cut off from the network as there are no alternative routes.

Increased capacity on the East Coast Main Line and the redevelopment of Darlington station will also allow for more frequent local rail services and for more stops on the intercity routes, creating better connections for Tees Valley, Chester-Le-Street and Northumberland. Without more capacity on the network these communities will continue to be served by infrequent links.

Offering a more frequent and reliable rail service will help to encourage people to use rail to transport goods, to travel to work, meetings with clients and for leisure. This will help to take cars off the roads and reduce congestion in the North East, helping to encourage more sustainable travel across the region.

In order to drive economic growth for the North East we need investment in our connections. Improved connectivity will help to open-up new markets and boost investment in the North East, create new jobs and training opportunities for people as well as encouraging sustainable travel and supporting the tourism and leisure industry. Without this much needed investment our region's potential will continue to be held back by out-dated infrastructure.

Therefore, we would ask you to provide urgent investment to upgrade the East Coast Main Line's infrastructure to ensure our region is fully part of High-Speed North and linked to the rest of the UK's high-speed rail network.

Proposals for Darlington station have been submitted and detailed planning work on the East Coast Main Line could begin immediately after Government commitment to the project, allowing for an early start on construction along with other elements of High-Speed North.

We look forward to hearing from you to secure the investment and improvements the North East needs.

Yours sincerely,

Get involved

www.neechamber.co.uk/fast-track-east-coast

fasttrackeastcoast@neechamber.co.uk

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