

promoting quality public transport.....

NorthWest Regional Development Agency
Renaissance House
Centre Park
Warrington
WA1 1QN

6th October 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

FuturesNW – TWNW response to consultation.

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing users of all forms of public transport in North West England. We are pleased to have been invited to respond to this consultation.

We feel a sense of ownership of the planning structure which developed in the region over the last decade, having participated through membership of the Regional Transport Advisory Group (RTAG), the examination in public of the Regional Transport Strategy and our responses to numerous consultations (accessible via our web site ¹).

A real vacuum is created by the dismantling of the NW Regional Assembly (NWRA with its RTAG and the 4NW leaders' Forum) and the NW Regional Development Agency (NWDA - which has been so supportive of TWNW). It seems doubtful that the government's new "localism" agenda ², even allowing for the creation of some powerful all purpose City Regions ³, will be able to fill this.

There is much in the consultation to support and on which to agree:-

- It seems regrettable but also inevitable that Local Transport Authorities, deprived of a share of the now defunct Regional Funding Allocation, will have to devise more imaginative funding packages, including making more use of the private sector and social enterprises in the voluntary "third" sector.
- We have made suggestions of possible funding streams to the House of Common's Transport Committee's consultation on Transport and the Economy, which will shortly be on our website and which we will be happy to share.

¹ www.travelwatch.northwest.org.uk

² Decentralisation and Localism Bill 2010

³ Combined Authorities pp Local Democracy etc Act 2009

- The overall NW **Vision** is positive and includes providing *excellent physical and digital connectivity across the region and supporting the integration of economic, environmental and social goals.*⁴
- Likewise the specific **Aim** to provide *a clear framework to guide future planning* is worthy of support, although TOWNW prefers the previous recently developed structures which we believe were fit for purpose.
- The theme⁵ of improving communications through sustainable transport structures is commendable, as is its specific commitments to address connectivity internationally, within and beyond the NW (especially in respect of the Northern Hub and access to High Speed Rail) and *between areas of opportunity and of need.*
- Despite the current recession there are clearly discernible underlying trends of passenger and freight growth which the NW's rail network is poorly placed to accommodate and which should ideally be addressed now.
- Whilst recognising that future "big ticket" plans (which include the Manchester Hub, HS2, rail electrification, Metrolink phase 3B, additional rail rolling stock and the development of intermodal freight terminals) may have to be temporarily delayed to protect urgent ongoing investment, the question of how these plans will eventually be approved is already being asked⁶. We would not wish to see support for any of them to be irrevocably withdrawn, and therefore urge that they should all be safeguarded.

Conclusion

It has been claimed that "transport is civilisation"⁷ and we suggest that the transport implications of the many other themes (example housing, the economy, employment, the environment, education, health, society etc) in the consultation could well be revisited and these interdependencies explored further.

TOWNW hopes this brief response to the relatively few specific transport issues cited is helpful.

Yours faithfully

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary

Author of paper: Paul Fawcett

⁴ These mirror vision within the now defunct Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which embraced the RTS.

⁵ Theme 4(6)

⁶ CILT NW Policy Committee's draft response currently circulating for comment

⁷ Rudyard Kipling