

Valentina Licata
Office of Rail Regulation
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN

5th February 2013

Dear Ms Licata

Re: Comments on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce is the largest Chamber in the UK, representing the interests of almost 5000 businesses and their 350,000 employees. Transport and particularly rail is of great interest as a great supporter of economic growth, helping to move people and goods more effectively. We have worked closely with partners across the North of England to lobby for additional investment into the rail network.

We are supportive of the clear vision and objectives expressed in the strategic business plan, particularly in terms of ensuring safety, driving investment in both infrastructure improvement and technology to improve efficiency, and the building of effective partnerships. Clearly driving down the cost of the UK railway is imperative going forward within the context of growing freight and passengers, cutting carbon dioxide emissions, improving reliability, modernising the railway and focusing on the customer.

Ensuring a railway fit for the future is vital and particularly in the context of the investment in the Northern Hub project. The building of the Ordsall Chord, additional platforms at Manchester Piccadilly and the rerouting of many transpennine services via Manchester Victoria will allow for a significant growth in rail capacity and will change the way that many people use rail to access the city centre. Primarily we want to see the Northern Hub completed on time and on budget.

One element that has been overlooked from the Hub project is the reinstatement of platforms at Salford Central station. There are currently 2 platforms in use (which require raising as part of the Hub project) and 2 decommissioned platforms which are on the route connecting Victoria with Piccadilly. Despite Salford Central being the closest station to Manchester Town Hall and a significant regeneration area, and being the construction site for the Ordsall Chord, many potential passengers are unable to access the route they will require from their nearest station.

We believe that it makes sense to reinstate these platforms whilst all the Hub work is being carried out, ensuring that the investment made reaches its full potential. From economic work done by Salford City Council there is clearly a business case for the additional work which would enhance the economic impact of the rail investment in the Hub.

We hope that you find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely

Chris Fletcher
Director of Policy and Communications