

## HADRAG and Railfuture Yorkshire: Response to Elland station phase 2 consultation

This is a joint response from HADRAG, The Halifax & District Rail Action Group, and from Railfuture Yorkshire Branch. We have organised comments below under the questions in the on-line survey.

**1 “How happy or unhappy are you with our proposals for a rail station in Elland?”** VERY HAPPY.

**2 Station, service levels, local public transport links and urgency to get station open** - NOTE: The following reflect our reading of “You said, we listened” comments from Phase 1 (specific references shown by asterisk \*). We are grateful for replies to previous comments by ourselves and others, but we reiterate certain issues.

### 2.1 The station itself

**(a) Shelters on platform.** We note more shelters are shown on latest graphics compared with earlier plan. Given the site, any increase in sheltered area would be appreciated. \*More extended canopies covering full platform width would be ideal, and, whilst we accept budget will be a limiting factor, **in a post-Covid world longer, open-fronted canopies may be more appropriate than smaller enclosed “bus shelters”.**

**(b) Accessibility.** \*Point about (accepted) difficulty providing compliant ramps noted. However, lifts are not yet 100% reliable and we would still ask whether the stepped access at one end could be (compliant) ramps instead.

**(c) Electric vehicle charging points in car park and (d) Cycle storage** – need to be sufficient.

**(e) Site, wider access.** We support the chosen site for the station and the \*reasons given. The wider access package is an essential feature of the scheme (see later comment).

**(f) Safety, customer service etc** \*Points noted. The transformative access package will undoubtedly help. We hope that in the future the train operator may wish to provide staff (even if not in a traditional booking office) on stations of this size to provide retail/information/access support for passengers.

### 2.2. Service pattern/level

**(a) We hope the plan for opening at December 2022 timetable change will not be allowed to slip (see 2.4 below).**

**(b)** \*We are also pleased to note WYCA longer term objective that “trains on both lines passing through Elland should run twice per hour”. **This is an essential aim**, which we expect to be realised when the lines through Huddersfield and Mirfield are increased to 4-track under the TransPennine Route Upgrade. Present service pattern through (Elland and) Brighouse is hourly (Wigan-) Manchester-Brighouse-Leeds and hourly Bradford-Huddersfield “shuttle”; i.e. only hourly to Leeds. This has provided a better timetable Bradford-Huddersfield but clearly reduced frequency to Leeds.

**(c)** Linked to **(b)** a service running fast from Brighouse to Leeds could have a journey time of less than 20 minutes Brighouse-Leeds, less than 24 minutes Elland-Leeds. This would make Elland a very attractive railhead, particularly if the service were half-hourly.

**(d)** Linked to **(b)** better connectivity along the length of Calderdale and towards Huddersfield/Wakefield should be an aim as well as links to Leeds.

**(e) Better Sunday services** are also required encouraging leisure travel by the whole community and visitors. (The present Manchester-Brighouse-Leeds does not operate on Sundays.)

**(f) Open access.** We hope Grand Central services to London which now serve Low Moor, Halifax and Brighouse will also serve Elland, which will be a convenient railhead for many parts of the surrounding area, and will also provide useful connectivity between Elland and Wakefield/Doncaster. (For example it is possible to commute by Grand Central to Wakefield in the morning, returning on a teatime service.)

### 2.3 Local bus network and potential NHS hospital links:

**(a) Local bus links.** \*We understand reasons given for not including bus lay-by or turning point within station bounds and hope a bus stop will, as suggested, be established close by on Lowfields Way. Buses serving Elland, Greetland and Stainland communities need to be able to call as close as possible to the station entrance. A local “hopper” bus network, providing a wider low-pollution alternative to local car travel, could be coordinated with the train services

at the station and link the Lowfields business park with the surrounding area. \*Point also noted about need for discussion with bus operators about changes to services: **however, with the mayoral West Yorkshire devolution deal we expect WYCA to take back control of bus services**, we reiterate the desire for hopper route linking station and Lowfields with Elland, Greetland and Stainland, complementing the active travel links in the access package.

**(b) Hospital links.** Adjacent to the A629, Elland could be an ideal access point for the two NHS sites Calderdale Royal Hospital (Salterhebble) and Huddersfield Royal Infirmary (Lindley), by means of a minibus link were provided from/to the station, perhaps on a demand-responsive basis and ideally free. This might be coordinated with the existing NHS shuttle bus between the two hospitals. We reiterate the need to explore this obvious “joined up” idea that could facilitate better travel between upper Calderdale and the two hospitals for staff, patients and visitors.

## **2.4 Concern about interaction with TransPennine Route Upgrade – Elland first!**

(a) The Elland line is likely to be used for diversions during the next few years when there is engineering work on the Huddersfield line. There may be times when Huddersfield station is closed for remodelling. Elland is well-located to act as an alternative railhead for Huddersfield passengers: we understand this possibility is under consideration, and this would be very positive. It is still not clear when TRU work will start; Elland must not be delayed:

- **Elland station should surely be completed first, and its opening should adhere to the December 2022 target.**
- **If Elland had to wait for TRU to be completed, the delay could be several years; people would be massively disappointed, and any such threat should be firmly resisted.** Elland is already more than 20 years late in the sense that it was originally planned as part of Brighouse line reopening (May 2000); Elland station did not go ahead at that time because of cost cutting, although it had good prospects for usage then as it does now.

(b) It is accepted that the TRU work will have an effect on Calder Valley lines services (not just Elland) during some phases of TRU work. When TRU is complete we expect the additional track capacity in the Huddersfield-Dewsbury to enable more frequent services over the Elland-Brighouse corridor (as in 2.2 above).

## **3 “How likely would you be to use a rail station in Elland?” Very likely. And 4, 5 & 6 Usage of station**

(a) The access package proposed opens up the station and surrounding area including Elland by active travel modes. Integration with a transformed local bus network would encourage further use. Local employment (Lowfields and Elland town centre) and retailing will benefit. Morrisons supermarket is close to the station. Housing areas around Elland Lane, Lower Edge Road and Dewsbury Rd are within walking distance. The station should be marketed for leisure access to a range of walking/rambling/cycling routes in lower Calderdale including the canal bank between Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse, the Calderdale Way long distance footpath, the Brighouse Boundary Walk, North Dean Wood leading to Norland Moor, and the Southowram hillside. Community rail initiatives should be supported including a station adoption group.

(b) The station will be used for all work and leisure purposes as listed in the on-line survey (Q5) and passengers will use all listed means of access (Q6).

## **7 “How happy are you with our proposals to improve car-free travel to the proposed station from across Elland and the wider area?” Very happy.**

**8 Comments on wider access package.** As remarked above this is an **essential** complement to the station, an impressive and excellent part of the scheme, providing new, high-quality, active travel routes from Greetland, West Vale and Park Road via new bridges and canal bank, not just to the station but linking a wider area.

- **All elements of this package need to go ahead and be ready when the station opens...**
- **... which we hope will be before the end of 2022.**

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