

UK Government Confirms New Liverpool–Manchester Rail Line Under Northern Powerhouse Rail Plans

January 16, 2026



The North of England is set to benefit from a major new rail connection between Liverpool and Manchester, following the UK Government’s announcement of updated plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) aimed at unlocking billions of pounds of economic potential across the region.

The multibillion-pound NPR programme is designed to deliver faster, more frequent rail services through a combination of new lines, upgraded infrastructure, and station improvements across the north of England. Plans confirmed on Wednesday 14 January include a new rail route linking Liverpool and Manchester via Warrington and Manchester Airport, alongside improved east-west connectivity across the Pennines between Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, and Sheffield.

The scheme forms a central pillar of the Government’s wider growth agenda for the North, with the potential to unlock around £40 billion in economic value. Analysis suggests that raising the productivity of the North’s five largest cities to the national average could add up to £40 billion a year to the UK economy.

The second phase of NPR will deliver three new stations at Manchester Airport, Manchester Piccadilly, and Warrington Bank Quay Low Level, with construction expected to begin in the 2030s. Enhancements to key Liverpool stations, including Liverpool Lime Street and Liverpool Central, are also under consideration, alongside wider city-centre regeneration plans being developed with Liverpool City Region authorities.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the announcement marked a decisive shift after years of delay:

“For too long, the North has been held back by underinvestment and years of dither and delay – but that ends now. This new era of investment will reignite the economy across Liverpool and Manchester, support their world-leading cultural and sporting sectors, and cement Manchester Airport as the gateway to the North. This new line will not only cut journey times, it will open up new jobs and homes, making a real difference to millions of lives.”

Councillor Tom Hunt, Leader of Sheffield City Council said: “This is great news for Sheffield. Being included in the first phase of the Northern Powerhouse Rail plans means that the early stages of delivery will provide better, faster trains to Leeds and Manchester, upgrades to capacity at Sheffield station and an important commitment from government to work with us on our tram-train expansion.

“Outdated transport infrastructure has held Sheffield back for too long. Thanks to the Labour government this will change. This is a very positive announcement and a sign of the government’s commitment to the North.

“Faster, more reliable journeys will help businesses in Sheffield and give people access to more opportunities. The investment will help us unlock new opportunities for homes and jobs around Sheffield station and across our city.”

Lord Blunkett said: “I am very pleased that as a consequence of the White Rose Agreement, signed last March, and the Rail Plan for Yorkshire – which I was pleased to chair – an essential first step is now to be taken to recognise the critical importance of the cities and towns east of the Pennines.

“It is essential that following the initial investment, the Spending Review in 2028 accelerates the development of a rail system to be proud of, and the connectivity of cities across the North to unlock the talent and the growth fundamental to future success.

“Yorkshire, with a population greater than Scotland, has long been neglected and this announcement starts the process of putting right years of neglect.”

The announcement comes as national attention remains focused on improving the delivery of major infrastructure projects. In November, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Project Delivery published its report, *Building a Better Future: Inquiry into Improving the Delivery of National Infrastructure Projects*, which was welcomed by the [Association for Project Management](#). The report calls for reforms to prevent major projects becoming overwhelmed by political, media, and public pressures, and sets out recommendations for strengthening delivery confidence across government. [Read APM’s response here.](#)