

Town included in ambitious rail link plans

Selby has been included in an ambitious rail scheme that would make journeys to Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield even faster.

The town's rail facility has been added to the final recommendation for the new Northern Powerhouse Rail network, which could bring billions of pounds to the North of England. Submitted by the Transport for the North, the proposals were agreed by local leaders, who called on the Government to pledge support for the plans.

Under the transport scheme, there would be significant upgrades and electrification on the rail line between Selby, Leeds and Manchester, and similar plans for the route between Selby and Hull. This would mean a substantial reduction to journey times for people commuting or travelling to other locations across the North of England and would lead to more tourism within Selby.

Alongside these upgrades, Transport for the North has called on the Government to commit to HS2 and more minor projects in Liverpool, Newcastle, Doncaster and Huddersfield. These ambitious proposals come ahead of the publication of the Government's Integrated Rail Plan that's planned for later this month.

It's expected that the Government's plans will set out long-term investment opportunities for the North's rail upgrades, as well as details on how this can be delivered.

Northern Powerhouse Rail is a co-cliented project between Transport for the North and the Department for Transport. Both have worked on drawing up the plans to radically improve the North's ageing rail network, in turn creating thousands of jobs, economic opportunities and helping slash carbon emissions.

Once delivered, the network is predicted to contribute £14.4bn in annual gross value added to the UK economy by 2060, create up to 74,000 new jobs in the North by 2060 and take the equivalent of 58,000 cars off the road.

Tim Wood, Northern Powerhouse rail director at Transport for the North, said: "This is the culmination of years of work on the original Northern Powerhouse vision to radically connect the North's communities by rail, create jobs and boost the northern economy for decades to come.

"Communities and businesses want to see certainty on what will be delivered and when to make key investment decisions and create new opportunities.

"We hope that the significant body of evidence worked up alongside the Department for Transport will be reflected in an ambitious commitment to investment in the North in the Government's Integrated Rail Plan.

"We can then swiftly press on with joint delivery for the Northern public. We've done the work together, now let's get on and deliver for the North together."

Under the proposed plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail, construction is aimed to begin by the mid-2020s. This project will link with the £17.5m Transforming Cities scheme that will be completed in Selby in 2023 and include improved rail, bus and pedestrian access in the town. Selby and District Rail Users Group has welcomed the statement from Transport for the North outlining the preferred route for Northern Powerhouse Rail, and hopes the Government will approve the plan.

Secretary of the rail group, Terry French, said: "The scheme would give a boost to the Northern economy stimulating jobs and growth. Electrification of the line through to Hull would allow more options for services to run through Selby and be another step on the way to a fully de-carbonised railway. The North needs connecting up and people living in the growing Selby district need to benefit from improved and quicker rail services.

"Good rail services are essential in persuading people and businesses to come to the Selby District. Equal Access at Selby Station is on the way, the Selby Station Gateway Scheme is due to be completed within a couple of years, and if the Transpennine Route Upgrade is completed by 2026, then Selby will become an even more attractive place for people to live and grow up in."

Ross stepping in to preserve dad's legacy

by ROSIE JEMPSON

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A dedicated son is continuing his dad's legacy by taking on the family business.

Ross Kneller has taken on a more hands-on role in the family-run care agency, St Margaret's Homecare, following his dad's passing last year.

As well as stepping up to help his mum run the business, Ross has been spending time rebranding the business and introducing technological advancements.

Ross said: "I wasn't involved in the business at all, but my dad was diagnosed with cancer last March he passed away last April. I got involved straightaway to help my mum with the business.

"With how the world was looking with Covid, it made sense for me to step in and help mum with the role my dad would've been doing."

Ross' parents set up the business 30 years ago, initially running a nursing home before transitioning into home care and domiciliary care. Ross said his parents liked the fact that, through their work, they could help people stay at home and be in the place they feel most comfortable for as long as possible.

Talking about the changes he has introduced, Ross said: "We've rebranded and created a new website to push the business forward and continue my dad's legacy.

"Most notably, we have also introduced a new app-based care management system to

Ross and his mum who now run the business. (11-03-56 SU)



provide a better service to our clients and bring all of our carers together during what is a very hard and lonely time for them all.

"The app will provide on-demand information. The clients' families are able to get unique logins so they can look at their relatives home care plan. They can see when the carers are due in and can see comments made regarding their family members wellbeing, or just general updates."

He added: "We didn't design the app for lockdown but, as we've entered this new way of life, it exemplifies just how important this system is going to be. It's a really good way to distribute information quickly to the relevant people. It's an investment, but we think it provides a better service and a better format for everybody in the business.

"The next generation looking for care support for their relatives are more tech savvy. We have invested in our website

because it's key for our first impressions to the next generation of families looking for care support for their loved ones."

Ross was full of praise for the staff working at St Margaret's Homecare.

He said: "The staff have just been incredible. Obviously what's happened with Covid has been very difficult but nobody's complained. They've worked really hard. They are on the frontline and are looking after clients that have been in and out of hospital. They've just been fantastic.

"Once this is over, we want to get everyone together and have a big celebration. Not just for my dad, but to say thank you to everyone. Our staff are the most important aspect of our business so to make them feel appreciated is really important to us."

Ross also said that the company is hoping to continue to grow and "employ more people in the areas that we operate".

Former firefighter loses unfair dismissal case

A former Tadcaster firefighter who referred to his gay colleague as "half a man" has lost his unfair dismissal case against North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Philip Staines was appointed as an On-Call Watch Manager at Tadcaster Fire Station in December 2018, but dismissed in July 2020 after it was proved he'd made numerous derogatory remarks to his colleagues.

On one occasion in July 2019, Mr Staines called his colleague, Johnny Metcalfe, "half a man", while it was also alleged that he'd referred to Mr Metcalfe as a "bent b*****d" in a separate incident.

These two allegations were in addition to Mr Staines being put on a final written warning in May 2019 after using the word "b***h" three times to refer to a female firefighter and using the line "your feet are a good size to fit in the kitchen" to another.

Following his dismissal in July 2020, Mr Staines took North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to a tribunal for unfair dismissal and breach of contract, which took place on Monday, February 8.

During the tribunal, Mr Staines alleged that he referred to his colleague of 18 years, Mr Metcalfe, as "half a man" due to his

height and not his sexual orientation.

This allegation was consistent with an investigation carried out by the fire service, which found "Mr Staines had not intended to be homophobic but it is recognised that Mr Metcalfe has reasonably interpreted the wording to have a homophobic connotation and it has caused offence". However, this view wasn't shared by employment judge, Sophie Buckley, who ruled that it was "reasonable" for Mr Metcalfe to view the remarks as homophobic.

At the tribunal, an account of the two incidents from Mr Metcalfe was read out, which said: "I decided to leave this incident alone in my mind at first, upsetting thought it was, I have learned to take abuse about my sexuality over the years (rightly or wrongly)."

At the end of the tribunal, Judge Buckley found that Mr Staines' behaviour did warrant dismissal from the fire service. However, it was agreed that the decision to terminate the former firefighter's contract without notice wasn't legal.

Mr Staines was given an uplift of 10 per cent on his notice pay, and it was confirmed

that North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service would agree on a figure out of court.

Summing up her judgement, Judge Buckley said: "I find that the use of language was inappropriate and it demonstrated a lack of judgment and insight but that there was no intention to offend.

"I have accepted, in relation to the first comment, that the claimant ought to have realised that it might be taken as a reference to sexual orientation.

"Taking into account the nature, degree and consequences of the comments, I find that, even taken together, they are not sufficiently serious to amount to gross misconduct. I do not think that the conduct is of such a grave and weighty character that it wholly undermines the relationship of trust and confidence and is incompatible with continuing the employment relationship.

"In my view, the conduct was certainly sufficiently serious to merit dismissal with notice because the claimant was under a final written warning, but I find that the respondent was not entitled to dismiss the claimant without notice."