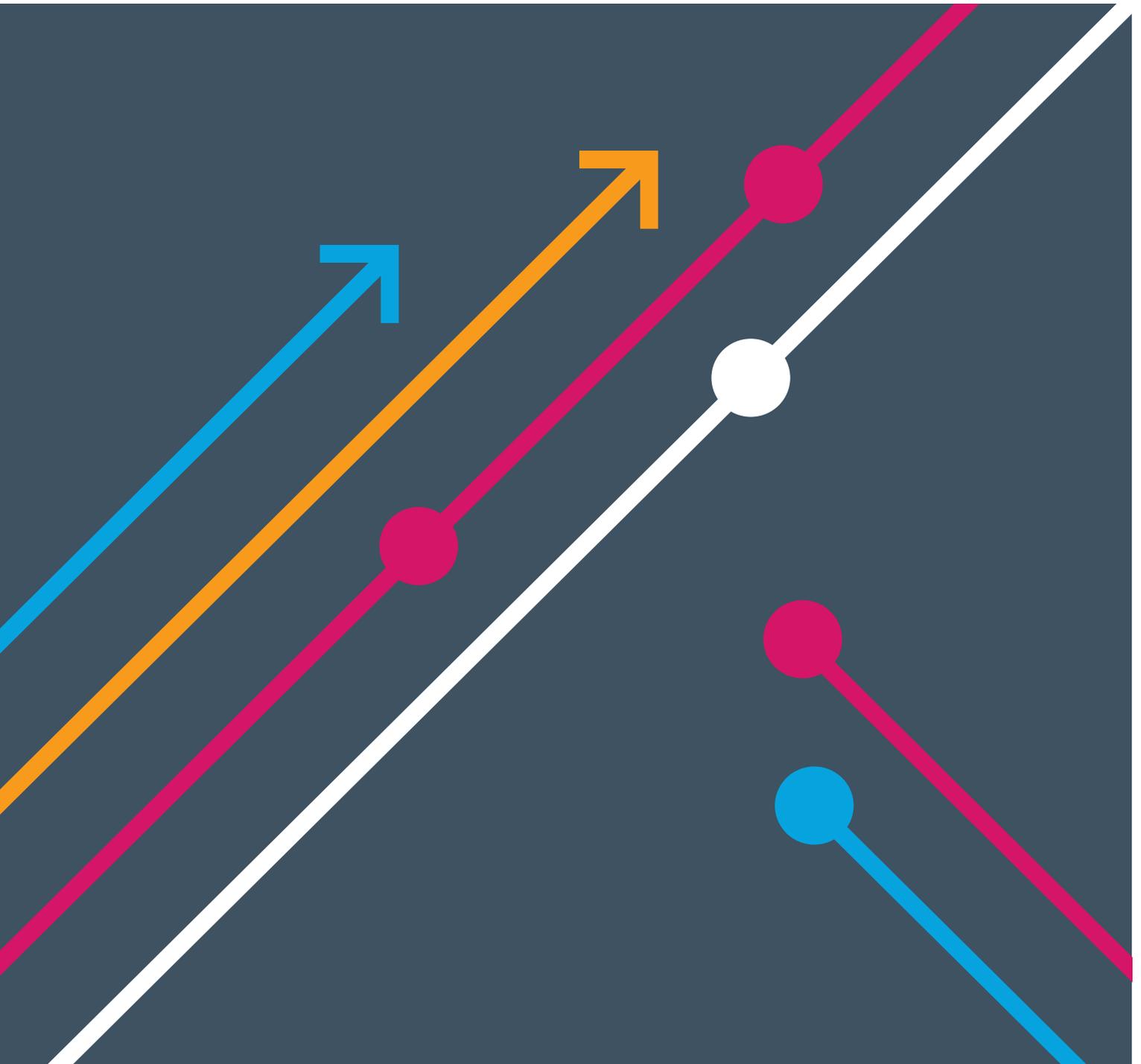


ACTION STATIONS



**HOW DEVOLUTION IS
TRANSFORMING RAIL
STATIONS FOR THE BETTER**



INTRODUCTION

THE URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP

represents the seven strategic transport bodies which between them serve more than twenty million people in Greater Manchester (Transport for Greater Manchester), Liverpool City Region (Merseytravel), London (Transport for London), Sheffield City Region (South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive), Tyne and Wear (Nexus), West Midlands (Transport for West Midlands) and West Yorkshire (West Yorkshire Combined Authority). The Urban Transport Group is also a wider professional network with associate members in Strathclyde, Bristol and the West of England, Tees Valley, Nottingham, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Authors: Stephen Joseph and Jonathan Bray. Image sourcing: Jess Fitch. August 2020.

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1

INTRODUCTION
AND SUMMARY

There's a consensus that the current way in which the railway is structured is not working well enough for passengers, taxpayers or the places the railways serve. As the Urban Transport Group, we have made the case that any meaningful rail reform should have devolution as a cornerstone.



We have produced two reports to support this case, our 2017 report *'Rail Devolution Works'* and our 2018 report, *'Rail Cities UK – Our vision for their future'*. These reports show that one in three rail passengers already use rail services that are fully or partially devolved, and that overall full devolution has led to more investment, better performance and higher levels of passenger satisfaction. They also show how high investment and devolved rail networks are crucial to the wider objectives that devolved authorities have for creating more inclusive and sustainable economies. In this report we focus on the benefits of the involvement of devolved authorities in stations.

We do this through looking at a wide range of case studies of how and why devolved authorities have improved stations for the better in recent years – and the wide range of different kinds of benefits that this has brought for passengers and the places the railway serves.

The report shows how stations are more than just the places where trains stop, they also help to define those places. They can act as attractive gateways which celebrate and reflect the history and aspirations of the places they serve.

They can be the focus for commercial and community activities, and they can be the spur and central focus for housing developments that help meet housing need – without creating more car-dependent sprawl.

In recent years we have seen more stations transformed from run-down Victorian hulks, or spartan bus-sheltered platforms, into places that people can take pride in, feel comfortable in using and which are fulfilling more of their wider potential.

Local councils, and devolved authorities and administrations, have been key to this process. The rail industry is naturally primarily preoccupied with running a train service and exploiting the commercial potential of the largest stations. Local stations are a drain on the railway's accounts. However, local, regional and devolved administrations are the wider custodians of place. They are long-term, patient investors. Indeed, in recent decades they have been one of the rail industry's biggest funders. They have a broader and long-term remit around improving the economies and environment of the places which stations serve. They are also democratically accountable to those places, which is a strong incentive to ensure that those stations meet the needs of local communities. They are also in the best position to seize opportunities to join the dots between different local funding streams and potential investors in order to realise opportunities. They see what stations can do for local communities and economies as we seek to build back better from the COVID-19 crisis.

The report goes on to show how, by and large, the greater the role of sub-national authorities, the better the local station. Devolved authorities have done this at a project level, through driving forward both individual projects at existing stations as well as promoting new or reopened stations.

They have also done this in a systematic way through following up on long-term investment strategies for the stations in their areas as well as through setting much higher standards for station facilities and maintenance than would otherwise have been the case.

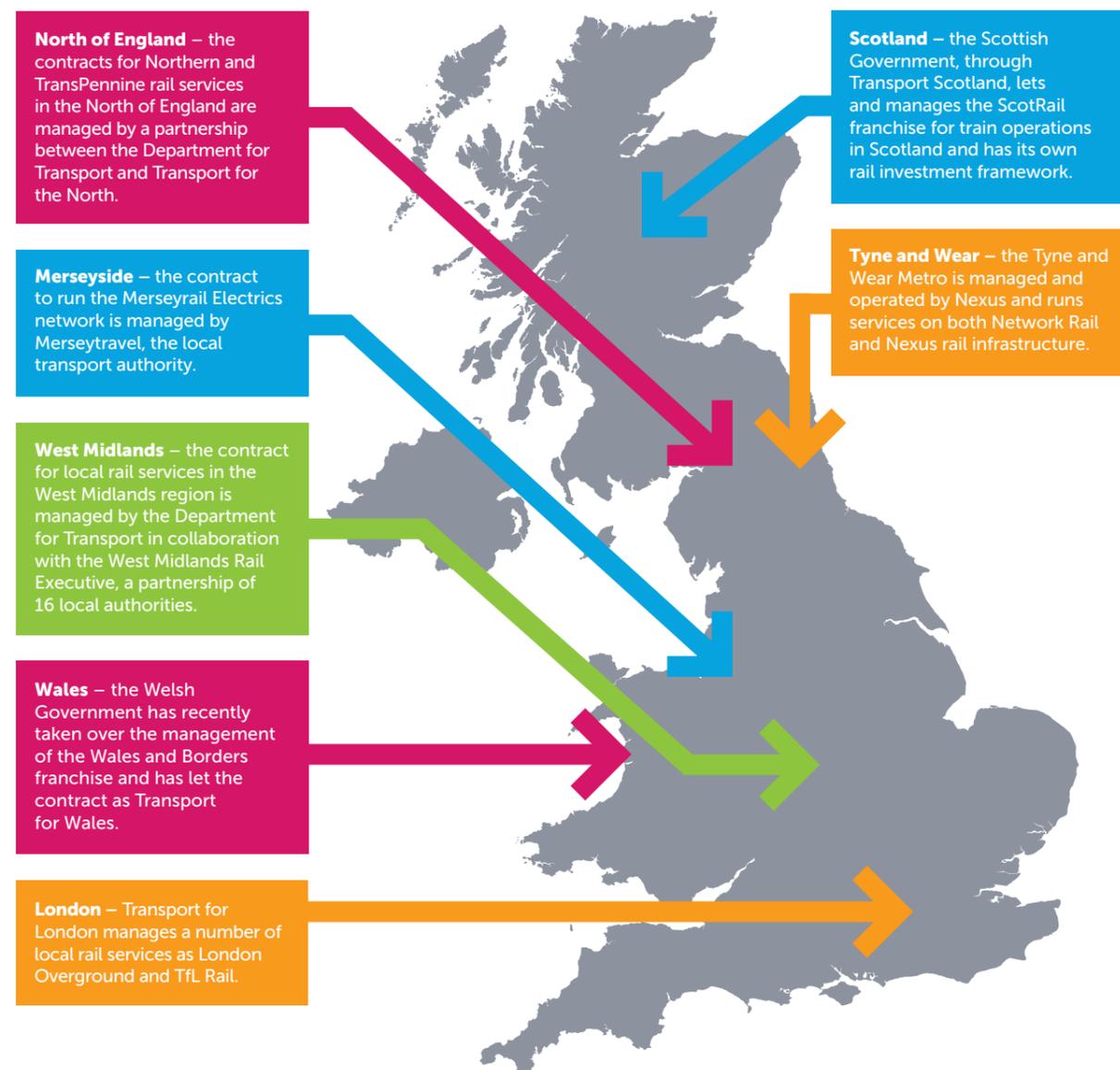
However, having said that, there is so much potential to do more. From putting more places back on track through reopening their stations through to improving interchange with bus and bike at existing stations. And from making stations more accessible and welcoming to diverse local communities to making space for art and culture at more stations.

The report argues that for stations to realise more of their potential, devolved authorities and administrations need to have significant influence over the future of stations. The way this happens in practice should be in line with local circumstances and aspirations and thus could range from taking on full or partial ownership of stations through to having a strong and binding relationship with the owners and operators of stations.

The rail devolution story – so far

Many local and regional rail services in Britain are managed wholly or in part by devolved authorities and administrations. In fact, one third of trips made on the national rail network are now on rail services which are either fully or partially devolved.

These include:



Making a difference at scale

The locally accountable transport authority for Merseyside, Merseytravel, has a long history of taking a strategic approach to ensuring stations on the local Merseyrail Electric network are welcoming, safe and well maintained. Whilst the signature look and feel of too many local urban rail stations in other parts of the country was a bus shelter and station signs pockmarked with air rifle pellet impacts, this neglect was never the case in Merseyside which has kept nearly every station on the network staffed from first train to last. In addition, all of Merseyrail's 66 stations now have Secure Station Status, and all 36 Merseyrail-controlled car parks are affiliated to the secure parking scheme. As well as setting higher base standards for stations, Merseytravel has invested heavily in upgrades and new stations as well as supporting innovation like cyclehubs and station shops that double as ticket offices. There are case studies on individual Merseytravel station projects in the rest of the report.

Another example of taking a strategic approach to raising the bar on stations is London Overground which is the brand for local rail services in London operated under contract to Transport for London. Every station on the Overground network has to meet far more demanding criteria than was ever the case before for information, accessibility, cleanliness and passenger security. And those criteria are enforced through regular inspections. TfL also invested in improvements to the fabric and layout of stations where that was needed to meet the new base standards – as well as increasing staffing levels and selectively investing in ticket gates to help tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce fares evasion. All stations have the common TfL Overground branding – a brand that means something to Londoners and which they can trust – unlike the here today, gone tomorrow commercial branding (which meant nothing to local communities) and low standards which prevailed before.



2

HOW RAIL DEVOLUTION IS TRANSFORMING STATIONS FOR THE BETTER

In this section of the report we demonstrate, with a host of case studies, how rail devolution is transforming stations for the better through:

- Meeting local housing need through new local stations
- Plugging more places into the rail network
- Transforming run-down stations into places to be proud of
- Making them into attractive gateways for the places they serve
- Ensuring they are cornerstones for local regeneration
- Making them part of joined-up transport networks
- Making them accessible to all
- Celebrating heritage and making space for art
- Reducing their environmental impact
- Involving communities

Meeting local housing need through new local stations

The UK needs more housing. But to achieve this without creating more car-dependent sprawl we need to plan housing, land use and transport together to ensure that more of the new housing we need has good rail access. Devolved authorities and administrations have been making this happen by building new stations which are specifically linked to new housing developments. They can do this because they are able to join the dots between local housing strategies, development sites and different private and public funding sources to get new stations built – often before, rather than after, the development is complete.



Credit: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Kirkstall Forge, West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Council worked with developer CEG, to transform the former Kirkstall Forge industrial site, four miles from Leeds city centre, into a new, rail-based development. A new station opened in 2016 and is integral to the site's development which, on completion, will provide 1,050 new homes, 300,000 sq ft of office space and 100,000 sq ft of retail, leisure and community space. The presence of the station on site prior to completion of the housing will establish public transport as the mode of choice for residents from the day they move in. The urban realm within the development supports the Combined Authority's wider goals for sustainable transport and active travel take-up and is linked to the Leeds Liverpool canal towpath cycling and

walking route, which was resurfaced through the Combined Authority's City Connect active travel programme.

West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds City Council and the developer secured £10.3 million from the Department for Transport to support the new stations at Kirkstall Forge and nearby Apperley Bridge, with additional funding from the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership. Kirkstall Forge station exceeded projected demand of 20,200 passengers in the first year, achieving those numbers in the first five months of operation despite the fact that the site is still under development. Service frequencies have subsequently been increased.

Maghull North, Merseyside

This new station on the Merseyrail network, opened in June 2018, serves a new housing development with 370 new homes. Further housing is planned in the near future, as part of the Sefton Local Plan. The new station connects local people to wider education and employment opportunities, as well as ensuring that sustainable transport options are available. It also relieves pressure on the existing Maghull Station. The £13 million station was funded from a combination of local and national sources with Network Rail undertaking the scheme on behalf of Merseytravel.

The fully accessible station also acts as a wider transport hub, with car and cycle parking as well as being served by local bus services. Artwork produced by seven local schools was displayed on the station fence at the time of opening, and in 2018 a sculpture was installed at the station commemorating the former Moss Side hospital nearby and its pioneering treatment of shell shock victims in World War One.



Credit: Merseytravel

Meridian Water, London

This station opened in June 2019 in a scheme led by Enfield Council with support and funding from the Greater London Authority, the London LEP, Transport for London and Network Rail. The new station replaces the old Angel Road station and provides improved facilities for passengers including around accessibility.

The station is at the heart of a £6bn development of the area and unlocks land for the creation of 10,000 new homes and thousands of new jobs. The aim is to create a mixed-use development, with the first phase delivering 725 homes and retail space, and the second phase bringing 250 affordable homes with workspaces on the lower floors. The development will also include schools, health services, and community and leisure facilities.



Credit: Enfield Council

Enfield Council is driving the development as a major investor and land owner at the site, aiming to ensure that local people are the main beneficiaries. The presence of the station on site prior to the development means that sustainable transport habits will be formed by residents from day one.

Shawfair, Midlothian

The Scottish Government and local authorities along the route were instrumental in the reopening of the Borders railway from Edinburgh through Midlothian to Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders. One of the new stations on the line is at Shawfair, Scotland's first new town in 50 years. When finished, the town will have 4,000 houses as well as schools, shopping and leisure facilities with a new town centre next to the station. By putting in the station early in the life of the development, it is hoped those moving in will develop the habit of using rail.

Evidence across the Borders railway line suggests that the reopening has attracted new residents to the area, with over half reporting the railway as a factor in determining their choice.

And elsewhere...

More locally driven, housing-led new station schemes are in the pipeline. Transport for London is extending the Gospel Oak to Barking line, part of its London Overground network, to serve Barking Reach, an area with over 10,000 homes planned. A reopened station at Willenhall in the West Midlands is set to serve an area of new housing. In all these cases, the involvement of the local transport authority is proving to be critical in promoting these schemes and assembling the funding to make them happen.

Plugging more places into the rail network

Local authorities and the Scottish and Welsh Governments have been instrumental in opening, reopening or upgrading stations, and sometimes reopening whole lines. These projects have opened up access to opportunity for more people in more places – including to jobs, training, education, healthcare and leisure. In some cases they have repaired some of the damage done during the excesses of the Beeching cuts of the 1960s. This is because devolved authorities are aware of both the proven economic benefits of putting communities back on track, but also the less tangible boost it can give to civic pride in communities that all too often can feel left out and left behind. In England, the city regions, and local authorities elsewhere, have a strong track record of promoting station reopenings with the PTEs (the transport authorities for the major city regions) opening 11 stations since 2000 (or 21 if London is included).

Pye Corner, Newport

This new station, near Newport on the Ebbw Vale to Cardiff line, was opened in 2014. It was delivered and part funded by the Welsh Government with other funding coming from the Government's New Stations Fund. The £3.5m project was one of the quickest new build stations in the UK, completed in just eight months. The new station connects local people to employment and leisure facilities along the Ebbw Vale line.

Forres, Moray

This station which serves the town of Forres with a population of 12,000, was re-sited in 2017 as part of Transport Scotland's £170m upgrade to the Aberdeen-Inverness line. Re-locating the station gave the town a modern two platform station with an accessible footbridge and lifts, as well as a bigger car park. It also allowed the line to be straightened out and made faster. Transport Scotland's plans for the line include provision for further new stations at Dalcross and Kintore.

Scotland and Wales

Scotland has seen a series of rail reopenings in recent years, including Stirling to Alloa in 2008, Airdrie to Bathgate in 2010 and the Borders Railway (Edinburgh to Tweedbank) in 2016. Blackridge station, in West Lothian, was a late addition to the scope of the Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Link project and was funded by the local authority with a view to recovering up front funding through developer contributions. In Wales, the Vale of Glamorgan line (from Barry to Bridgend) reopened in 2005, and the Ebbw Vale to Cardiff line reopened in 2008. All these reopenings (including the new stations en route) were promoted and funded by the devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales, with some in areas with previously limited public transport provision.



Borders Railway

Laurencekirk, Kincardineshire

The station of this small town between Dundee and Aberdeen, which is home to around 3,000 people, was closed in 1967 and then reopened in 2009 with funding from the Scottish Government. The station building, which had become derelict, was refurbished and a car park added.

The objectives of reopening the station at Laurencekirk included linking commuters to employment and education opportunities as well as encouraging public transport use and modal shift away from private cars. According to analysis by Transport Scotland, 62% of users who had changed jobs since the station reopened said that the station was a significant factor in their decision, showing how the new station has opened up opportunities for the local community.



Transport Scotland's assessment showed that annual usage, estimated beforehand at 36,000 for the first year, was in fact 75,000 and now sits at 86,000; 83% of users commute to Aberdeen of which 56% would have driven if the station had not been there. This resulted in 2.6 million vehicle kilometres removed from the road network each year.

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

This North Worcestershire town, 13 miles south west of Birmingham with a population of 29,000, had a poorly serviced station that had little capacity to expand. A new station facility was developed by Worcestershire County Council, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and Network Rail, and opened in 2016. It was built adjacent to the old station, has additional, longer platforms, and the lines that serve it have been electrified so that more suburban services from Birmingham now serve the town.

Car parking facilities have been upgraded with improved lighting and charging for electric vehicles and direct access to local bus services.

With four trains an hour compared with the previous hourly service the station is seeing significant growth and ORR estimates that patronage has increased 21% since the new station was completed.



Credit: West Midlands Rail Executive

The station has an unusual ownership and operating structure, with WMCA being the Station Facility Owner, but with day-to-day operations sub-contracted to West Midlands Trains Ltd. This structure allowed WMCA's predecessor, Centro, to borrow to fund the capital costs which are financed through station access charges.

Brighouse, West Yorkshire

This rail station in West Yorkshire was reopened in 2000 by the then West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (Metro). It had been closed by British Rail in 1970. In the intervening years the line through Brighouse had been retained for freight but passenger services to Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield were introduced. Since 2000, the station has gone from strength to strength with service frequencies increasing and direct trains to and from London added in 2010.

Data from ORR shows that passenger numbers have more than doubled since 2009-10.

Further accessibility improvements to the station have been made by West Yorkshire Combined Authority and train operator Northern in the form of greater accessibility through better audio announcements and departure screen passenger information.

And elsewhere...

More stations and new or reopened lines are planned.

As part of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy, Merseytravel, with other partners, is exploring ways to extend the railway to Skelmersdale, one of the many New Towns built without rail access.

The North East authorities are promoting the reopening to passengers of the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne freight line (including six new stations, one of which provides interchange with the Tyne and Wear Metro), serving former mining communities in South East Northumberland. Also in the North East, Durham County Council have co-funded the introduction of a new station at Horden on the Durham coastline to open up the railway to east Durham communities.

The new West Midlands rail franchise includes commitments to provide services to five new stations that are being developed and delivered by the West Midlands Combined Authority with support by West Midlands Rail Executive. The new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston will support the regeneration of a poorly connected part of the Black Country, while the three new stations on the Camp Hill Line will help take cars off a very heavily congested road corridor in south Birmingham.

The West of England authorities, with West of England Combined Authority (WECA) funding, are planning to reopen the Portishead and Henbury lines, as part of its MetroWest network of new and upgraded suburban rail services: including new stations at Portishead, Pill, Ashley Down, North Filton and Henbury. With the New Stations Fund, and WECA and Bristol City Council funding, a new station at Portway, adjacent to, and serving the existing park & ride site, will be opening in 2021.

There are also plans for new stations in West Yorkshire, including at Elland, Leeds Bradford Airport Parkway, White Rose and Thorpe Park.

New technology may help plans for new and upgraded services. South Yorkshire has pioneered the Tram-Train in the UK, linking its Supertram network to rail lines. The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 envisages three Pathfinder Tram-Train projects at different locations across the region, linking the Metrolink tram network to heavy rail lines. Wider expansion of Tram-Train is planned if these schemes prove successful.

Transforming run-down stations into places to be proud of

If stations are neglected and run-down, they can put people off from travelling by train, be difficult or dangerous to use (particularly for disabled people and for vulnerable groups) and can drag down their local environments. Local authorities have been instrumental in rescuing and revitalising run-down stations because they understand the value they bring to communities and have put together packages of funding from a wide range of sources to make stations attractive and vibrant features in the areas they serve.

Wakefield Kirkgate, West Yorkshire

In 2009, the then Transport Secretary Lord Adonis described Wakefield Kirkgate as “the worst medium to large station in Britain”. It was a scene of serious crimes, including assault, robbery and the rape of a female passenger in the subway. To turn the station around, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Wakefield Council teamed up with the charity Groundwork to identify funding sources to regenerate the station.

The work, carried out between 2013 and 2015, was led by Groundwork Wakefield and delivered in two phases. This included refurbishment of the Grade II listed station building to bring it back into use, creating units for new businesses; a café; exhibition spaces; meeting rooms for community and local business; and accommodation for Groundwork Wakefield itself. Other improvements included a welcoming entrance through to the platforms, landscaping, increased car and cycle parking and bus interchange facilities.

The newly revitalised subways now host a permanent art exhibition, featuring local Yorkshire landscapes and the sound of a brass band playing.

A key driver in the success of the project was the establishment of a project board consisting of directors and senior staff from all the organisations essential to make the project work. They were able to navigate through funding and contractual challenges, working to a single vision. ORR data shows that the number of passengers using the station has increased by 18% since the redevelopment.

Served by the free, circular Wakefield citybus service, the regenerated Wakefield Kirkgate station also provides access to the nearby Hepworth Gallery, a key cultural institution in the city and winner of the Art Fund’s Museum of the Year in 2017. The station regeneration is linked to and leading a wider regeneration of the Kirkgate area in Wakefield, with other new developments underway.



Before regeneration. Credit Rept0n1x via Wikimedia Commons [CC BY-SA 3.0]



Before regeneration. Credit: Groundwork Wakefield



The station after the completed works. Credit: Groundwork Wakefield



Credit: Hamilton Davies Trust

Irlam, Greater Manchester

Very little attention had been paid to Irlam Station for many years, with its buildings boarded up and derelict. In 2015 the station was completely renovated, restoring original features of the building to retain its character. The new station has become a community hub, with facilities including: enhanced lighting and security cameras to create a safe environment; improved waiting facilities; the café bistro '1923', serving food and drinks; new toilets; free Wi-Fi; meeting spaces; improved landscaping and planting around the station; parking for cars; a cycle hub; and a child-friendly area, 'Platform 9 ¾', featuring James the steam engine.

One result from this project has been that, with greater activity around the station, graffiti and vandalism have reduced. Since the renovations, there has also been a 30% increase in usage at the station.

The regeneration cost £2 million and funding came partly from the local Hamilton Davies Trust, which wanted to create a landmark and regenerate the surrounding area. A partnership was formed between a range of organisations to fund and support the project including Salford City Council, NC Developments, Transport for Greater Manchester, Network Rail, Northern Rail, Irlam and Cadishead History Society and the Friends of Irlam Station. The partnership working that delivered the regeneration of Irlam station is an exemplar of what can be achieved when local organisations come together to combine ideas and resources. Transport for Greater Manchester is actively pursuing a broader approach, seeking to replicate this partnership elsewhere across Greater Manchester.

Liverpool Central, Merseyside

A new passenger friendly concourse was opened in 2012 at Liverpool Central, a station that had been previously described as one of the worst ten stations in Britain by former Transport Secretary Lord Adonis. Merseytravel took the opportunity to undertake a much more ambitious revitalisation plan because much of the station fabric had reached the end of its lifespan and was in need of renewal. The project was met with great acclaim and its success was recognised by the industry with the National Transport Awards' 'Station of Year 2013'.

The concourse renewal was delivered alongside two Network Rail projects to refurbish and make better use of the station platforms. Merseytravel coordinated the concourse works to be delivered alongside the Network Rail projects, the latter requiring the station to close for a period.



Because of the close relationship of the projects, and the impact of the works across the city centre, Merseytravel initiated a strong stakeholder process covering its own and the Network Rail projects. A bigger redevelopment of the station is now planned to provide additional station capacity.

Severn Beach, South Gloucestershire

This station on the Severn Estuary, North West of Bristol, had been badly neglected, with just a bench seat and no shelter. The local community was isolated, with high levels of deprivation and poor public transport access to Bristol. In 2015, the station was rebuilt with new seating, shelters and planters to create a positive station environment, as well as panels with information about the history of the local area.

The project was led by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, with South Gloucestershire Council and the operator Great Western Railway.

A 'Forgotten Landscape' grant, a large-scale natural and cultural heritage project from the Heritage Lottery Fund, also helped improve access to the Severn Vale area. Together with these improvements and the opening of more local industry in the area, there has been an increase in passenger numbers at the station and subsequent increases in service frequencies. The station won 'Most Enhanced Station Building and Environs' at the 2016 Community Rail Awards and local community groups look after the station on an ongoing basis.

Making stations into gateways for the places they serve

Stations are important gateways to the communities they serve and improving them helps elevate the impression visitors get when they first arrive into a town or city, as well as giving residents a greater sense of local pride. Local authorities naturally understand how important it is to make first impressions count by having a station which is both an attractive heritage or new build facility, and which provides a good gateway to the town or city it services. Local authorities are also well placed to source different funding streams and to ensure that works on the station are coordinated with efforts to improve the surrounding highways and built environment over which they have significant control and influence. They can also ensure that local history is reflected and celebrated, and that gateway stations are included in wider cultural and social events and programmes.

Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

From 2008 to 2009, the area outside Huddersfield Station was completely transformed with funding from Kirklees Council and the then Regional Development Agency. It is often considered one of the best stations in the UK and provides an exceptional gateway to the city. In 2019 it won Network Rail's World Cup of Stations.

St George's Square in front of the station now has fountains and water features, and a statue of the former Prime Minister Harold Wilson who was born in the town. The square hosts events, including the annual Food and Drink Festival and the Festival of Light, as well as performances, markets and pop up stalls.

Further upgrades to the station and surrounding area are planned by Kirklees Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. These include additional entrances to provide better access, improvements to the surrounding highways and the creation of a taxi hub, off St George's Square.



Credit: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

A community arts project has created an enhanced platform 2 area at the station, which was recognised in the 2018 Community Rail Awards. The project engaged with groups in the Penistone Line Partnership, promoting rail travel and connectivity between Northern and TransPennine services, as well as boosting confidence for users of the railway.



Sheffield, South Yorkshire

From 2002 to 2005, Sheffield Station and the area around it was redeveloped. The station regeneration was led by Midland Mainline (now East Midlands Rail), as the main train operating company, with Sheffield City Council and partners undertaking the regeneration of the surrounding area.

The aim of the regeneration scheme was to transform access to the station, its visual appearance and the general facilities. Seeking to build a more appropriate gateway into the city, the redevelopment created accessibility benefits to residents and commuters alike, opening up the station front and creating a new welcoming and attractive urban square. The taxi rank was relocated from inside the main concourse and the archways were filled with windows to improve views in and out. Platform surfaces were also improved and a pedestrian bridge added to connect the station with the Sheffield Supertram stop.

The changes to the station have been a success, with passenger numbers more than doubling since before the works began, according to ORR data. The station redevelopment itself created an additional 185 direct jobs, with up to 3,000 new indirect jobs around the station as the result of this investment. These developments combined to generate an estimated £3.4m in additional GVA to the Sheffield economy.

Sheaf Square, the public space situated outside the station, was also transformed at the same time as part of a project to create the Gateway to Sheffield. The station and the square, which was previously a car park, now form part of 'the Gold Route' which goes through the square, past the 262.5 feet (80m) Cutting Edge water feature, up Howard Street and into the city centre. This Gateway to Sheffield provides an exceptional first impression when leaving the station and won the 'Project of the Year' Award in the 2006 National Rail Awards.

Ipswich, Suffolk

Suffolk County Council led the transformation of Ipswich station in 2017, creating a high quality gateway to the town. Working with Ipswich Borough Council and the operator Abellio Greater Anglia, the works rebuilt the station forecourt, improving access for pedestrians and cyclists, and the links to bus and taxi services from the station. The concourse was also improved and expanded with new catering and retail outlets. The station was awarded 'Large Station of the Year' in 2018, following the improvements.



Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Doncaster station is being transformed. The car park has been moved from the front of the station and the area it occupied is being turned into an attractive public space, with landscaping and water features so as to enhance the station's role as the gateway to the city. Improvements to the station will open up the town centre and improve access for visitors and businesses. There will be a new taxi rank, new car parking and easier drop off facilities, improving traffic flow around the station. A new station canopy on the front of the station will provide a covered walkway. There will also be better access for cyclists and secure cycle parking.

The scheme is being carried out by the local council in partnership with the train operator, now LNER, and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, with £7 million of Sheffield City Region funding. This is expected to attract investment and jobs into the town.

And elsewhere...

More stations are receiving this treatment. Coventry has a £82m masterplan for its station, which will involve better links to the city centre, a new footbridge and canopies, and in the second phase, a new station concourse, car park and link to a new bus station. It is being delivered by Coventry City Council and funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Department for Transport and others.

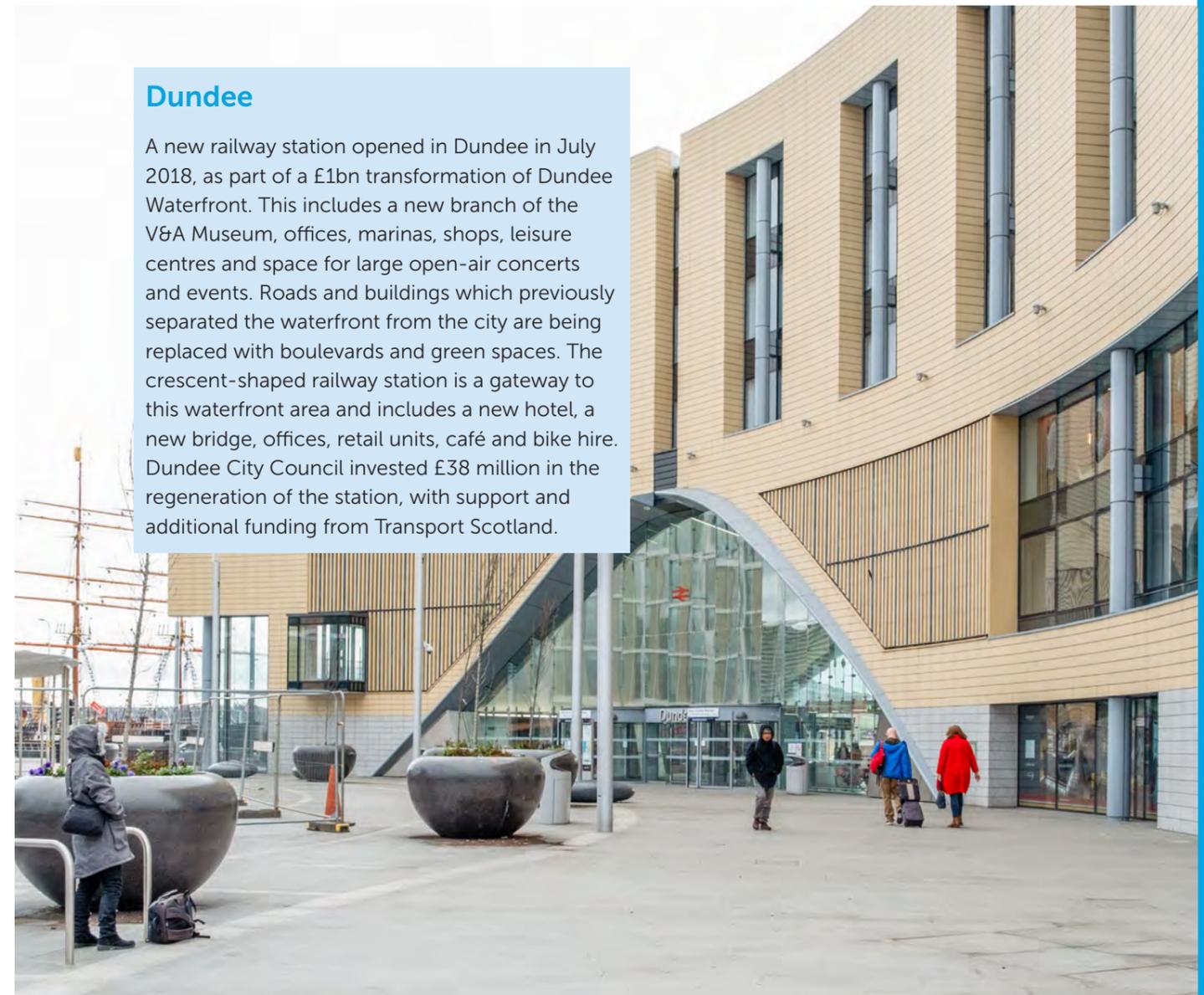
Bristol Temple Meads Station – which sees over 11 million passengers a year and is anticipated to reach 22 million by 2030 – is a nationally significant rail interchange, set to undergo a major redevelopment. Network Rail, alongside the West of England Combined Authority, Homes England and Bristol City Council, will lead on the development of a more than £200 million masterplan to ensure the station has the capacity, design and quality it needs to meet its role as a gateway to the city and wider region.

Stations as the cornerstones for wider regeneration

Station redevelopment can form part of much wider local regeneration and redevelopment plans for a whole area, in which the station becomes the heart of new retail, cultural or office developments – often making the station a destination in its own right. Time and again local and devolved authorities have played a pivotal role in assembling land, funding and partners in order to put improved stations at the heart of exciting new developments.

Dundee

A new railway station opened in Dundee in July 2018, as part of a £1bn transformation of Dundee Waterfront. This includes a new branch of the V&A Museum, offices, marinas, shops, leisure centres and space for large open-air concerts and events. Roads and buildings which previously separated the waterfront from the city are being replaced with boulevards and green spaces. The crescent-shaped railway station is a gateway to this waterfront area and includes a new hotel, a new bridge, offices, retail units, café and bike hire. Dundee City Council invested £38 million in the regeneration of the station, with support and additional funding from Transport Scotland.



Newcastle, Tyne and Wear

The iconic Newcastle Central Station was regenerated and upgraded by a partnership between the City Council, Network Rail, the train operator (then Virgin Trains East Coast) and local business groups, with a mix of Government funding. A glazed portico entrance was created, the area in front of the station was improved and the taxi rank and the flow of traffic by the station were changed. This has led to new shops – including local independent retailers – opening in the station, and also new enterprises in the Stephenson Quarter surrounding it and in the railway arches underneath.

The upgrading of the station has acted as a catalyst for the regeneration of the whole area and attracted an estimated £10m of private investment to businesses and buildings.

A second phase will create a new western entrance to the station, improve local amenities and open up access to help regeneration of the adjacent Forth Banks area development.

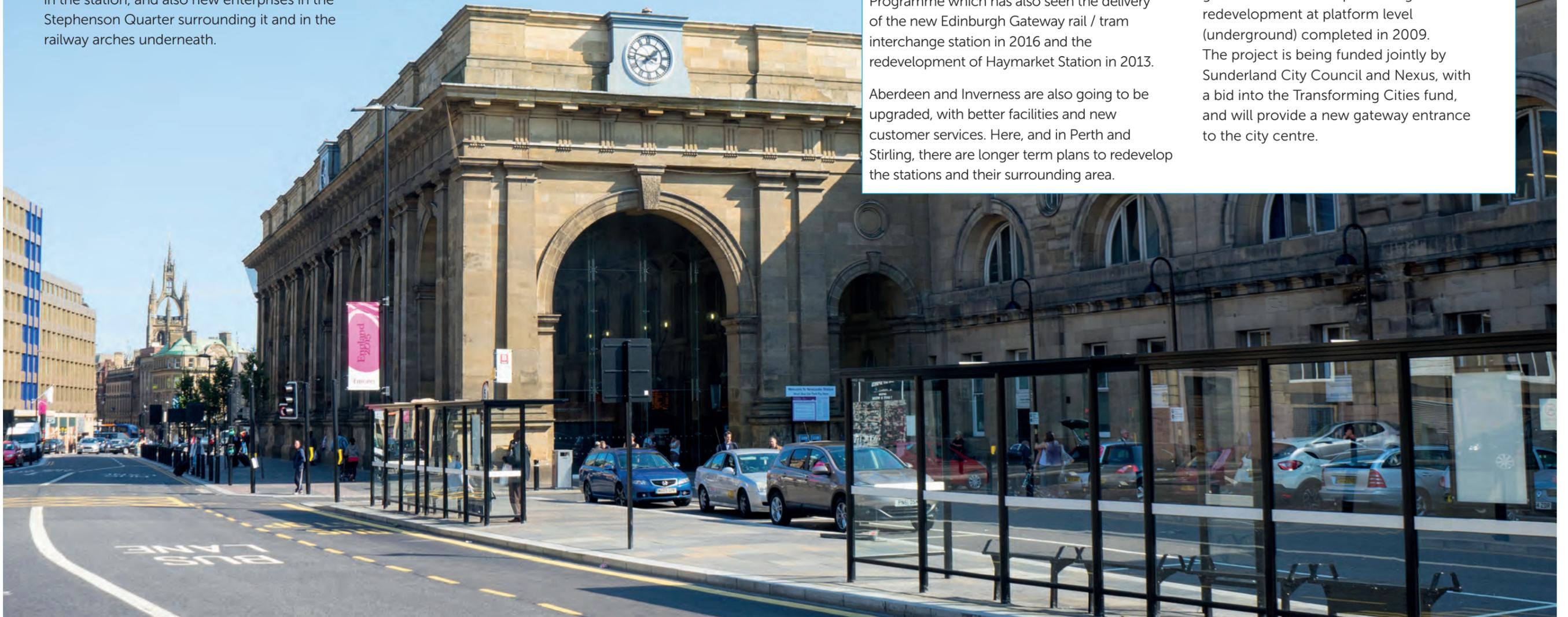
And elsewhere...

Other major stations in Scotland are being upgraded. Glasgow Queen Street is seeing a major £120 million redevelopment, with old 1970s buildings demolished and new entrances giving better links between the station and the surrounding area, as well as an expanded concourse, longer platforms and better passenger facilities. Due to be completed in Spring 2020, this is part of the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme which has also seen the delivery of the new Edinburgh Gateway rail / tram interchange station in 2016 and the redevelopment of Haymarket Station in 2013.

Aberdeen and Inverness are also going to be upgraded, with better facilities and new customer services. Here, and in Perth and Stirling, there are longer term plans to redevelop the stations and their surrounding area.

In 2014, the Scottish Stations Fund was established to support new stations or improvements to existing ones across Scotland where local authorities or regional transport partnerships can demonstrate the need for a new station or improvements.

In Sunderland, a project is underway to redevelop the station concourse, replacing a dilapidated 1960 structure with a modern glazed structure complimenting the redevelopment at platform level (underground) completed in 2009. The project is being funded jointly by Sunderland City Council and Nexus, with a bid into the Transforming Cities fund, and will provide a new gateway entrance to the city centre.



Stations as part of joined-up transport networks

Devolved authorities and administrations want to see the railways form part of a coherent and integrated public transport network for the places they serve. A network where interchange between different rail services is easy, safe and convenient, and where interchange between rail and the rest of the local public transport network, including buses, light rail, walking and cycling, is also straightforward. This is why they have a long track record of investing in better rail interchanges, often using their own resources to do so. These interchanges also reflect wider objectives including provision of good parking for cycling, secure parking for cars, as well as being safe and attractive buildings in their own right, boasting facilities that passengers need – be it travel information, public toilets or retail.

Liverpool South Parkway, Merseyside

This station was initiated by Merseytravel as a transport hub to serve the business and retail parks of South Liverpool; to provide an interchange for the nearby Liverpool John Lennon Airport; as well as serve local communities in an area of high deprivation. Prior to the station's construction and opening in 2006, public transport journeys from parts of South Liverpool to the city centre took upwards of 40 minutes on infrequent bus services.

The new station has improved journey times, allows interchange between different rail lines, has an integrated bus station with a bus link to the Airport, park and ride spaces, secure motorcycle and cycle parking, and walking and cycle access. There is real time information on trains, buses and airport flights, a heated passenger waiting area and the station is fully accessible. Use of the station has increased dramatically, more than tripling between 2012 and 2018, according to ORR data.



Liverpool South Parkway

Rotherham Central Station and Barnsley Interchange, South Yorkshire

Both Rotherham and Barnsley have had their railway stations upgraded and linked to other modes of transport by the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. Rotherham Central Station underwent an £8.5m redevelopment in 2012. The station's upgraded features included a distinctive curving roof, new lighting, CCTV, a new waiting room, passenger information screens, a ticket office, retail kiosk, and improved disabled access with the introduction of a lift facility. Rotherham Central station is close to Rotherham Interchange, providing connections to other public transport modes and links to the wider area, and now has Tram-Train services too, with specially built lower platforms.

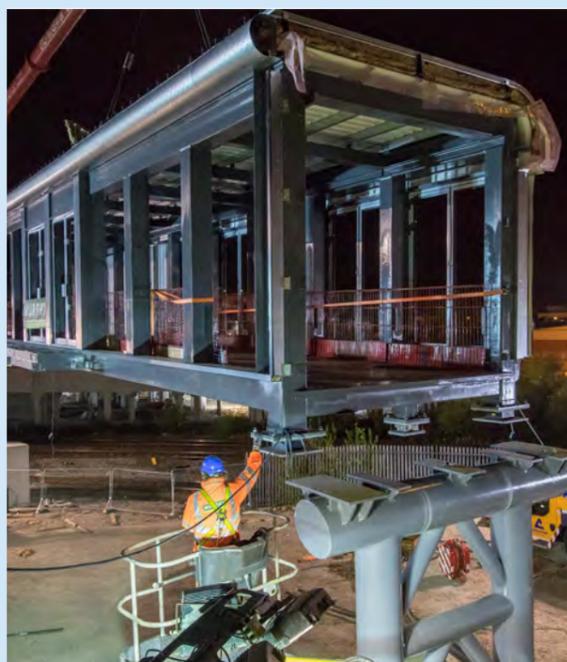
Barnsley Interchange, opened in 2007, links buses to the railway station and has a rail ticket office in the bus station and a rail park and ride facility included. A new bridge will soon provide pedestrians and cyclists with a safe and accessible route over the main Sheffield to Leeds railway line, connecting the existing public transport provision and Market Gate car park to The Glass Works, Barnsley's new retail and leisure destination.



Rotherham Central Station. Credit: AHR

Bolton Interchange, Greater Manchester

Transport for Greater Manchester has been instrumental in creating a new Bolton Interchange, which opened in 2017 and was financed through the Greater Manchester Transport Fund. The new, fully accessible bus station has a 'skylink' bridge connecting the interchange with Bolton railway station, providing improved links between bus and rail services. There is a free circular Metroshuttle bus service linking the interchange to the shopping centres and other key destinations around the town. New features include improved information, enhanced waiting facilities, a café, shop and free Wi-Fi. A cycle hub provides secure storage for up to 48 bikes, offering integration for those choosing active travel for part of their journey. The interchange will support wider regeneration plans in the area.



Credit: Mulholland Media

Wolverhampton, West Midlands

Wolverhampton Station is being redeveloped as part of the Wolverhampton Interchange project. The first phase, completed in 2011, saw the construction of a new bus station. The second phase, which started in September 2018, involves the complete rebuilding of the railway station, a new footbridge link to the bus station, and a refurbished and expanded car park with bike and motorbike parking. Alongside this, the West Midlands Metro tram line is being extended to the railway station. The Interchange is itself part of a wider city redevelopment project involving a new hotel, offices and shops, and bars and cafes.

The project is jointly funded and managed by the City Council, Transport for West Midlands and West Midlands Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership, train operators, Network Rail and the Canals and River Trust.



Credit: West Midlands Combined Authority

Making stations accessible to all

There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK – around 22% of the population, according to the Department for Work and Pensions. The most common reported disability is a mobility impairment, at 24%, but it also includes a range of other impairments including vision, hearing, dexterity, mental health and learning difficulties. Disabled people are less likely to drive meaning they are often more reliant on public transport than the wider population. According to research by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), 60% of disabled people have no car in the household, compared to 27% of the general population.

The rail network was generally not built with accessibility in mind – platforms are often reached by steps, and there are sometimes large gaps between trains and platforms. There is now increasing emphasis on making stations accessible for people with disabilities, as well as those with luggage, children or bikes. Devolved authorities are at the forefront of these efforts.

In Great Britain, the Access for All scheme has improved accessibility at many stations. Access for All improvements at Scottish stations are determined on a pro rata basis against the wider GB plans. In addition local authorities have made use of available funding for station improvement programmes, as well as taking a more strategic approach to making their transport networks more accessible to all.





A new train for the Merseyrail network featuring an innovative sliding step

Merseyrail

Transport authority Merseytravel has a programme to make stations on the Merseyrail network accessible. It has shown that ordinary suburban Victorian railway stations can be made accessible for people with disabilities. Thirteen years since Merseytravel took over the management of the Merseyrail network, lifts have been installed at nine stations, customer information systems are at every station, and accessible toilets have been installed at 52 stations. At Formby station, new lifts were installed by Merseyrail for £1.54m, just over half the cost proposed by Network Rail (£2.92m), demonstrating that devolved authorities can deliver accessibility improvements with greater efficiency.

Liverpool Central, the busiest station on the network, has had major refurbishment including improved waiting facilities, accessible toilets and improved access to the lift. A fleet of new trains which are arriving for the network feature pioneering technology which will allow a sliding step from the train to meet the platform edge, creating step free access for all passengers across the network. To prepare for these, almost 100 platforms at Merseyrail stations have now been altered and raised to facilitate level boarding with the new trains.

Transport for Wales

With the new rail franchise starting October 2018, Transport for Wales has set up an accessibility panel for its rail services and is working with the panel to conduct an audit of stations in Wales.

It is committed to creating dementia friendly stations and services, and has ringfenced £250,000 annually for accessibility improvements.

Greater Manchester

Transport for Greater Manchester has a Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG), whose members have a range of disabilities and provide insights into the challenges experienced by disabled people using public transport.

This group has been used to help with the design and delivery of projects throughout the city region, like the Bolton Interchange.



Celebrating heritage and making space for culture

Many stations are exemplary historic buildings which are a source of local pride and reflect the history of the places they serve. Local authorities are the custodians of place and have a strong interest in preserving and celebrating the historic buildings that are integral to local identity. This is why local authorities have taken so many opportunities to invest in, and support, the preservation and renewal of the railway's built heritage. This is often done in a way that also provides better facilities for passengers and breathes new life into the historic fabric through public art, interpretation displays and opening up rooms and spaces in those stations for the use of the local community and independent businesses.

Hackney Downs, London

This station has an art gallery and reading room called Banner Repeater in its platform buildings. Banner Repeater, named after a piece of railway signalling equipment, showcases new artists and commissions new works. It opened in 2010 with support from the local council. It has a reading room with arts books which commuters can take away.

The Founder, Ami Clarke, said: *"We open up at eight in the morning and the platform's packed. People pick up publications, take them away, have a read, put it down on a tube seat, then someone else picks it up and puts it down on the bus. Alternative ideas regarding disseminating artists work is really the driving force of the project."*

The space has been secured until at least 2020 with low rent arranged by the Mayor of London with Transport for London and the train operating company Arriva Rail London.



Credit: Banner Repeater



Credit: Banner Repeater

Edge Hill Station, Liverpool

Part of this station has been turned into a vibrant arts centre, with studio and performance space and offices for arts organisation Metal. The project, completed in 2009, brought together funding from Merseytravel, Northern Trains, Network Rail, the Railway Heritage Trust and the local Kensington Trust.

Metal makes use of the restored 1830s buildings at the oldest active passenger railway station in operation. The organisation uses art as a catalyst for societal change, working to create positive impacts in the local neighbourhoods of Edge Hill, Kensington, Wavertree and Toxteth. It has also taken over an abandoned part of the station and transformed it into a community garden space.



Credit: Metal / Hire Space

Eco-stations

Devolved authorities and administrations are signing up to ambitious net zero targets for reducing carbon emissions. They recognise that historic, and even relatively modern stations, on networks in their areas were often built in ways which are inefficient in their use of energy and lack resilience to the more extreme weather conditions that climate change is causing. Stations and their surroundings (including car parks) can also be characterised by large, unshaded and non-porous hard surfaces which provide little shelter from extreme weather conditions and also promote rapid water run-off which can contribute to flooding. As more local and devolved authorities make the connections between transport, energy and the decarbonisation and adaptation of the built environment, they are increasingly promoting 'eco-station' initiatives which point the way to measures that could be taken up more widely on the transport network and in the wider areas that local and devolved authorities serve.



Rochdale Interchange

Rochdale Interchange, Greater Manchester

This £11.5m Transport for Greater Manchester transport interchange links bus and light rail services on a former brownfield site. It includes a micro hydropower scheme to provide electricity for the interchange. The turbine harnesses the kinetic energy of the flowing water in the River Roch adjacent to the interchange.

The installation uses a 21kW Archimedean screw and a fish pass was also installed alongside to allow migratory fish to pass upstream. The turbine produces 86,000 kWh of electricity per annum and should reduce the interchange's carbon footprint by 25%. It is expected that it will deliver lifetime CO₂ savings of 1,900 tonnes.

Accrington Eco-station, Lancashire

This new station building, opened in 2010 as part of a European-wide sustainable stations project, was promoted by Lancashire County Council with partners. It features: solar panels on the roof and in the car park, which produce up to 30% of the electricity needed at the station; solar-heated hot water to keep the station warm; and a water recycling tank that uses rainwater to flush the toilets instead of wasting clean drinking water. The station was built using recycled local stone from a quarry less than three miles away, recycled crushed glass instead of sand for the stones to rest on, and eco-concrete, which is at least 30% recycled materials.

Ainsdale, Merseyside

This Merseyrail station has been extensively renovated and is now the most environmentally friendly on the network, having opened in 2018 and achieving a CEEQUAL sustainability assessment rating of Excellent. The new booking office has solar panels, low energy LED lighting with smart controls and rainwater harvesting tanks to serve the toilet facilities. The new station building also improves facilities for passengers with customer information screens and improved waiting facilities.

And elsewhere...

Sustainability is an integral feature of the new building at Rotherham Central Station including the sourcing of local materials and the careful consideration of all materials used. Renewable technologies were incorporated through rainwater harvesting and photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the main entrance building.

Merseytravel's Liverpool South Parkway also has solar PV cells and a rainwater harvesting system to reuse wastewater.

The roof of the station is built with recycled aluminium panels and timber from certified sources, and the doors for the bus stands are kept shut to retain heat except when buses arrive.

The Transport for Wales rail franchise is aiming for its stations and electrified railways to be powered by 100% renewable energy, with at least 50% sourced in Wales.

Involving communities

Local and devolved authorities are accountable to – and regularly consult with – the communities they serve. They also understand these places because they are based within them and their staff are local residents. They are therefore far better placed to involve communities in decision-making and in the future of local stations than Whitehall officials or those in the headquarters of large corporations based many miles away.



Kilmarnock station subway artwork. Credit: WAVEparticle: portfolio.waveparticle.co.uk

Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire

The Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust was set up in 2014 by community groups to bring a number of redundant railway offices into community use and create the Kilmarnock Station Community Village. The first phase of restoration was completed in August 2015, creating brighter modern facilities which offer office space and meeting rooms used by a range of local groups as well as a gift shop, with local arts and crafts, a café and a bookshop. The Trust has also developed an active travel hub for bicycle hire and a bicycle maintenance area.

Alongside the refurbishment of the station, Kilmarnock Connections established a community art installation, transforming the station's subway into a living-museum artwork.

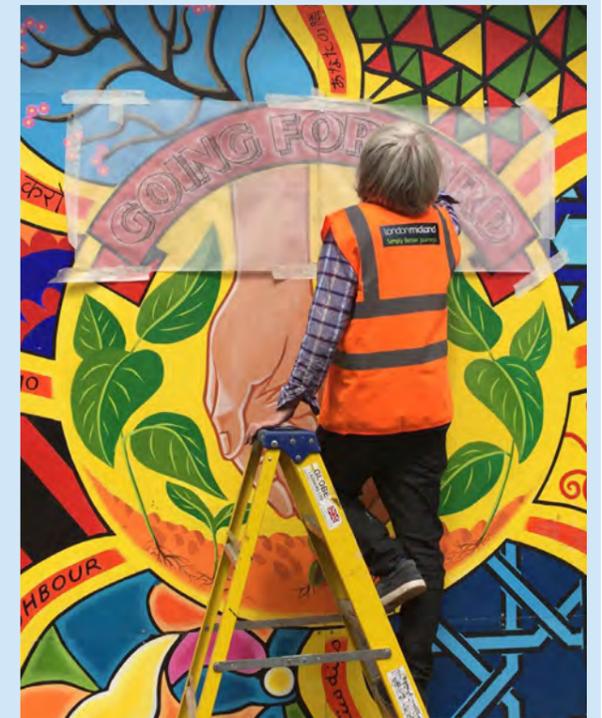
Initiated by a partnership led by ScotRail, community arts organisation WAVEparticle developed the project with a theme of connecting the town to the station, involving local people, schools and colleges. The installation creates a sense of pride and ownership in the heritage, creating a community asset that celebrates the town's history.

A further phase of restoration is currently planned to refurbish several rooms with the purpose of creating a training kitchen, dining/meeting room and toilet facilities. Work is due to commence in Spring 2020.

Smethwick Rolfe Street, West Midlands

Transport for West Midlands came together with the train operator and Network Rail to improve Smethwick Rolfe Street, an inner Birmingham station. They worked with the Smethwick Abraham Foundation, which brings together faith groups to improve their community and run events. The community wanted to improve the station garden, and did so by planting low maintenance shrubs, herbs and pollinator friendly plants.

Improvements were also made to the station buildings, transforming the station master's office with a history and community exhibition space. Students from nearby Sandwell College were engaged in this part of the project, planning the re-plastering and decorating of the room and installing the exhibition. This gave the students real-life project experience, solving problems and working with a client.



Credit: Network Rail

Kirkdale, Merseyside

Everton Football Club and the Everton Free School worked with Merseyrail in 2016 to regenerate Kirkdale Station. The station, which is used by 3,000 fans on matchdays, as well as commuters, has been regenerated by the partners, with a 'blue' garden being installed.

The garden includes planters and seats from Goodison Park Stadium which allows passengers to sit and enjoy the new garden. The scheme aimed to enhance the community feeling and open up communication with hard to reach groups. Sally Ralston, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager for Merseyrail, said: "Everton Football Club is at the heart of the local community in this area so it really is fantastic to see them adopting their local train station."

Acton Central, London

At this station on the London Overground network, Transport for London has been working with the community and other organisations to establish an Energy Garden. Opened in 2018, the garden aims to connect travellers to nature, enhance the station environment, improve air quality and biodiversity, and provide an educational resource to the local community. The project at Acton Central Station is one of 30 across London Overground platforms and stations, led by Repowering London and working with community groups at each location. The schemes include installing solar panels, water pumps and other small-scale energy interventions, alongside community gardens and food growing plots.

3

DEEPENING AND WIDENING THE BENEFITS THAT RAIL DEVOLUTION BRINGS TO STATIONS

This report has shown the benefits that have been achieved so far from the involvement of local authorities and devolved authorities and administrations in stations. However, there is so much potential to achieve more through greater devolution of responsibilities for stations.

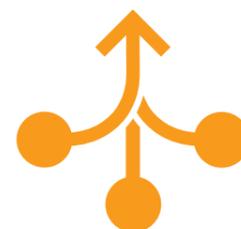
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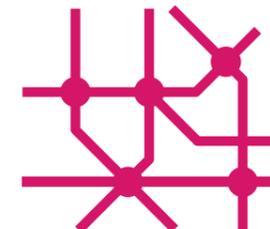
Ensuring that stations have the same branding and look and feel as the rest of the local public transport network. So, instead of stations feeling separate from both the local public transport network and the identity of the area they serve, they become an intrinsic part of both – a single integrated network with one fare system under a common brand.



Setting more demanding (and enforceable) minimum standards for stations around the provision of facilities, cleanliness, accessibility, personal security and information.



Ensuring plans for stations are more systematically integrated with wider plans for meeting housing need, supporting economic development and plans for rapid decarbonisation.

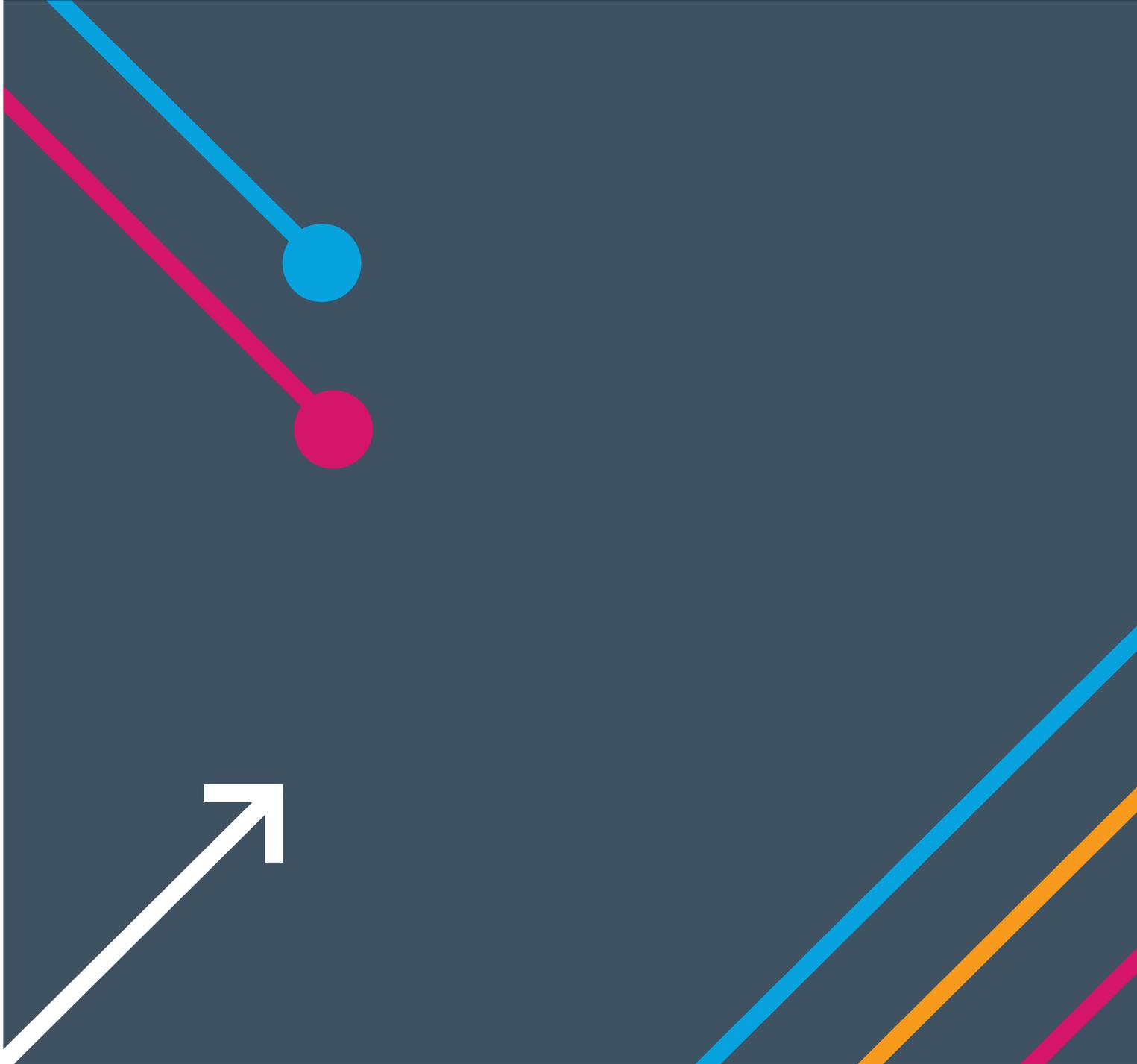


Looking at the network of local stations as a whole when assessing opportunities for development and improvements (which can also learn from the experience of previous projects).



Ensuring that investment in station reopenings is fully integrated with wider strategic transport capital investment plans in terms of prioritisation, allocation of funding and interplay with other capital investment programmes (such as park and ride).

In order to achieve all this, the principle is that devolved authorities and administrations need significant influence over their local stations. In practice, different authorities and administrations may wish to take different approaches. This can range from taking full or partial ownership of stations through to having a strong and binding relationship with the owners and operators of stations.



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