

Speech: Ambitious transport programme is fundamental to the Northern Powerhouse

Thank you and good morning, everyone.

It's a real pleasure to be in Manchester today (15 November 2018).

My thanks to David and the Transport Times team for inviting me.

I welcome the opportunity to talk about transport across the North.

Because this is an exciting time.

We have already announced the biggest ever funding package for northern transport.

Just a few examples of what we're delivering:

- £3 billion over the next few years to improve rail journeys between Manchester, Leeds and York
- £337 million for new Metro Trains in the North East at last year's Budget
- £3 billion of northern road improvements in the current investment period
- smart ticketing for buses and trains
- every train on the Northern and TransPennine networks new or modernised by 2020, and
- so many improvements already completed – from Ordsall Chord to the electrification of the railway between Manchester and Liverpool

But these schemes are just a snapshot of where we are today.

And what we've achieved in government in just 8 years.

Which in the transport industry is not long at all.

In fact, it is just the start.

The start of a sustained programme to rebuild the transport fabric of the North and deliver the Northern Powerhouse.

Something that was much overdue.

I know lots of people here are still sceptical about the prospects for better transport.

I completely get why.

Particularly after the introduction of the new railway timetable earlier this

year.

And ongoing industrial action on Northern.

The worst of the summer is behind us, but passengers in the North are still enduring poor performance on many routes.

I am determined to tackle the causes of disruption.

That's why the government has launched a fundamental review of the industry, to recommend significant reforms.

And we're working with franchises to ensure passengers are properly compensated.

But the bigger picture here is that we are playing catch up.

In 2010, we didn't just inherit an economy on its knees.

We also inherited a transport network that had been in decline for decades – particularly in the North.

With a backlog of maintenance schemes that should have been completed long ago.

We knew that for a region of 15 million people, spread over a huge area of the country, transport connections simply weren't up to scratch.

Connections with Scotland, the Midlands and London.

Across the Pennines.

And within cities and between areas of economic development.

What we're doing now is making up for those decades of neglect.

Figures from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority show that in the 3 years to 2021, central government's transport capital investment per head for the North West, North East, Yorkshire and Humber is higher than for London, the South East and South West.

And the area to receive most funding in England over that period is actually the North West.

The government is ambitious for transport in the North – which is why we're delivering £13 billion of investment in the 5 years to 2020.

And this morning I've been finding out where some of that money has gone – by officially opening the new A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.

This is a great example of how transport funding can make a big difference.

Delivered as a partnership between central government and local authorities.

The new relief road won't just speed up journeys on the vital south Manchester corridor, and tackle congestion on local roads.

It'll help create 5,000 new jobs.

Generate up to £2.5 billion of extra economic activity.

Get more people cycling and walking.

It will support new housing – such as nearly 1,000 recently built homes at Woodford Garden Village.

And it's critical for the airport too – which has grown into a fully-fledged, global gateway for the North, linking local businesses with fast growing markets around the world.

For example, last week my Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg was there to launch a new route to Mumbai.

But Manchester Airport will not flourish if there's poor surface access for passengers and cargo.

So the new relief road will make journeys better, and help the airport grow.

It will also provide better links to the £1 billion Airport City that's already proving to be a catalyst for jobs and growth across south Manchester and Cheshire.

Of course, the new road accounts for just a small part of our programme across the North.

That includes:

- plans to dual the A66 across the Pennines, connecting Cumbria with the North East
- the completion of a continuous motorway route on the A1(M) and M1 between Newcastle and London which I opened in May this year
- adding capacity to the M6, M1, M60 and M62 – by making them smart motorways, and
- better road links to the port of Immingham

All part of the biggest road building programme that the region has seen for a very long time.

In October I also announced 2 early win schemes to be developed as part of the Major Road Network programme:

- the A595 at Grizebeck – the infamous Cumbrian bottleneck, and
- work to improve the York Outer Ring road

The wider modernisation of northern roads will continue – through to the next stage of our Roads Investment Strategy between 2020 and 2025.

When for the first time, all the revenue raised by Vehicle Excise Duty will

be ring-fenced to spend on roads themselves.

Including £25.3 billion for the Strategic Road Network.

The largest ever investment of this kind.

To build the transport connections that the North needs – and that will provide a legacy for generations to come, we have to be ambitious.

So when I hear Northern MPs saying they'd prefer Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) to HS2, my response is simple: we need both.

HS2 was conceived, developed and is now being delivered as a national railway – but in particular to improve connectivity and capacity in the North and Midlands.

That is why the HS2 B Bill is in Parliament now.

It is vital to provide the extra capacity we need on busy North-South rail routes, which are currently among the most intensively used in Europe.

So our commitment to HS2, the full network to Manchester and Leeds, remains undiminished.

We're already seeing signs of the massive impact it will have.

There are 7,000 people currently working on HS2 and over 2,000 businesses have contracts.

In the West Midlands, the regeneration potential is clear around Curzon Street and the interchange station in Solihull.

In Toton, we have announced plans for a HS2 development body to bring forward jobs, homes, and infrastructure.

And in Leeds, demonstrating cross-party support, Councillor Judith Blake recently told me of the huge enthusiasm for the scheme, particularly around the South Bank development.

Rather than talk HS2 down, we want to see this enthusiasm spread across the North.

In fact, there are strong reasons why HS2 should actually pave the way for NPR.

And why the case for NPR is actually bolstered by HS2.

50 years of transport underinvestment means Northern cities don't just have poor connections to the rest of the UK – they have poor connections to each other, and within the city regions themselves.

The last time we built new rail links to the centres of our great Northern cities, Queen Victoria was still on the throne.

Although even as early as 1837 – they were not universally popular. One parish clerk, after seeing a locomotive for the first time, was quoted as saying,

That was a sight to have seen; but one I never care to see again.

Ladies and gentlemen – we don't get these opportunities often.

We need to take advantage of them while we can.

So we can provide businesses with better access to local labour markets – and better national links to suppliers and customers.

Making the whole of the North more attractive for inward investors.

And there was good news for NPR in the recent Budget with an extra £37 million to further develop the business case.

Elsewhere in the Budget, Greater Manchester was awarded an additional £69.5 million – and Liverpool £38.5 million – from the Transforming Cities Fund.

Money that will improve connections between suburbs and inner cities, boost jobs, reduce congestion and support new homes.

Already the 2 city regions have been allocated £377 million from the fund, giving them a significant new resource with which to solve local transport problems.

This comes on top of support for key schemes like Metrolink.

So don't let anyone claim that transport in this part of the world is underfunded.

Nor does the region lack clout.

We have created Transport for the North.

We have handed significant responsibilities to the Mayors of Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region.

Today the North West has more powers, more responsibility and more control over its transport destiny than ever before.

But let us also remember that the North is not just about cities.

It also has some of the most stunning countryside in Europe.

And a very important rural economy.

That's why we're also supporting local railways like the Hope Valley line.

Network Rail is proposing to modernise sections of the railway between

Bamford station and Jagers Lane Bridge in Hathersage.

And around Dore and Totley station.

We are now updating the business case and anticipate being able to announce a delivery date in the next year.

So it's a pleasure to be here again and to stand up for our record on northern transport.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is delivering palpably more investment for northern roads and railways.

That is empowering transport authorities across the region like never before.

And that will continue to see the growth and prosperity of the North as one of our biggest priorities.

This is a time of real opportunity.

So let's be ambitious for transport in the North.

Let's work together towards a shared vision for the future.

And let's build an enduring transport legacy that the North can be proud of.

Thank you.

[Speech: Hampton-Alexander Review speech](#)

I am really delighted to be here because this is such an important cause and the third report of the Hampton-Alexander review is an incredibly valuable piece of work for government as well as for business.

I'd obviously like to thank Sir Philip, Denise Wilson, members of the review and also KPMG who are hosting today's event, for your leadership and your determination in driving forward gender equality in the workplace.

Now you'll have noticed that I've got one of the longest titles in government, and I'm Minister for Women as well. And as Minister for Women in the 21st century I shouldn't need to say this, but treating women fairly in the workplace really matters.

And this year we have celebrated 100 years of the first women gaining the right to vote in this country. We've also, of course, made history by becoming the first country to require large companies, large employers, to

publish extensive information about their gender pay gaps. And what this meant, was that for the first time more than 10,000 businesses were having to have conversations at board level about how they treat their female employees. And we feel that we are moving in the right direction. There are more women in work than ever before and more women-led businesses.

And thanks to the Hampton-Alexander review almost 100% of FTSE 350 companies have reported their gender breakdown at senior executive levels this year.

There's a higher percentage of women on boards than ever before – 26.7% across the FTSE 350.

And we've reached more than 30% in the FTSE 100 for the first time.

The number of all-male boards has dropped from 152 in 2011 to 5 today.

But this shift in the business landscape has been achieved by setting ambitious, but not unrealistic, targets for business. And one of the greatest aspects of the work of the Hampton-Alexander review is the fact that it is led by business. Working with businesses to help them make the most of the skills women offer. I know that the review has worked and continues to work with many of you in this room. The 30% Club, the Women's Business Council, the Financial Reporting Council and many others are doing so much valuable work in business.

There is plenty to celebrate, but there is of course much more to do. With two years to go to meet the 33% target of the Hampton-Alexander review, this report sets out very clearly where more effort is needed.

We have only 12 female CEOs in the FTSE 350. It was around 20 years ago, that Marjorie Scardino become the first female CEO, and it's seen as pretty surprising, frankly, that two decades later we are only just dipping into double figures.

And the FTSE 250 has a lot more to do in getting more women into senior executive roles. I very much hope that they will learn from the best practice set out in today's report.

Please don't think that I'm not aware that many of you in the audience will be thinking, 'Well hang on a minute, Parliament needs to do better as well when it comes to more women in Parliament.' I promised my speechwriters that in every speech I give I will be using this phrase – if there are any women in the audience who would like to stand for public office, please do so, I ask you to stand.

In today's economy and society it is essential that we make the most of everyone's skills, talent and energy, both men and women. We know that girls continue to outperform boys in many subjects at school. Over 50% of UK university graduates are female, and almost 50% of UK workers are women. But they are still missing at the top of businesses and it's common sense to have a diverse leadership team that will bring with it fresh perspectives, innovative ideas and a range of experiences.

You know the board that better reflects its customers, clients and supporters, is better able to understand their needs, and as has already been mentioned this morning, it makes good business sense too because companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their industry averages. And McKinsey's research estimates that bridging gender gaps in employment could add £150 billion to the UK economy by 2025.

So if we want our organisations to succeed, and to compete successfully internationally, and I've heard the comments about Brexit, we must include women. But current predictions are that we will need to wait until 2043 for gender equality in business leadership. According to the World Economic Forum more than two centuries to close the global gender pay gap.

We cannot accept that. Talented women are out there. Now we need to make more of them, make sure more of them are getting the experiences that will prepare them to take up leadership roles. We need to tackle the policies and cultures that keep women from entering certain sectors and driving women out of the workplace. For example challenging the assumption that it is only women who care for others, and that men don't have a role.

We want to work with you to bring about changes in our working culture.

We've introduced the right for every employee with 26 weeks continuous service to request flexible working. We have introduced Shared Parental Leave and Pay, because we know parents want choice in how they share care.

And we have just announced that we will consult on requiring employers with more than 250 staff to publish their parental leave and pay policies, so job applicants can make informed decisions about whether they can combine the role with caring for their family.

We established the Women's Business Council to maximise women's economic potential. And I would encourage you all to sign up to their Men as Change Agents programme, or ask a male leader from your organisation to do so, because that can be a very powerful way of affecting change.

And with gender pay gap reporting, that was a government first by the way, we enjoyed a success rate of 100% of organisations reporting by this time. And that is apparently unheard of in government programmes so thank you to all the businesses that did their bit and complied with that deadline.

But with gender pay gap reporting publishing the data is of course the first step. The next deadline will be upon us very soon. I hope you're all preparing for that. And what we want to do is to work with you to work out where the problems are so that you can take action to solve them. The figures are just the first step, we need action plans as to how you're going to tackle those figures as well.

And of course we know that some sectors and organisations face greater challenges than others.

I am delighted that this year the Hampton-Alexander Review has carried out a

sector analysis, ranking organisations according to their progress on gender balanced leadership.

Because companies need to get to grips with the specific issues of their sector – take the lead, challenge the status quo and drive change.

We've published the latest evidence on what works to help them.

Because with the right advice, every workplace can harness the talent of their whole workforce, through employment offers that cater for individual choices and circumstances.

Now this will be more difficult for some sectors than others, because they have been traditionally male dominated. But my challenge to those sectors is that we are not bound by the past, and frankly we should not define ourselves by it. So they have the greatest challenge but they also, I think, have the greatest opportunity.

So I'd like to thank again Sir Philip and his steering group for the work that they are doing, all that is being achieved so far.

The Lord Davies target of 25% was met; the 30% Club's target of 30% has been met.

And now we need to pull out all the stops to ensure the Hampton-Alexander targets are met.

I therefore urge all companies, no matter their size or the sector in which they work, no matter what their starting position is, to support, and engage with the work of the review.

Because we are leading the world on this together.

And we have much more to do to make sure that women's talent and the heights of their ambitions are the only determining factors, in their ability to succeed and make it to the top.

Because this is about ensuring every sector, every community and our nation is strong and fit for purpose – the best it can be.

Thank you.

Speech: Hampton-Alexander Review **speech**

Minister for Women Victoria Atkins: Speech at the launch of the Hampton-Alexander Review 2018

[Press release: Tonbridge Hildenborough residents invited to flood scheme events](#)

The existing Leigh Flood Storage Area currently reduces flood risk to approximately 1,200 homes and businesses in Tonbridge. Working in partnership with Kent County Council (KCC) and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC), the Environment Agency's scheme will increase the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and create a new flood embankment in Hildenborough. Together, the works will reduce flood risk to a further 230 properties.

Enabled by funding from KCC, TMBC, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, and Government's Flood Defence Grant in Aid, the Environment Agency is planning to submit a planning application for the scheme in 2019. Construction is due to start in 2020 and be complete in 2023.

Julie Foley, Environment Agency Area Director said:

The Leigh Flood Storage Area already helps to reduce flood risk to over 1,200 homes and businesses. Thanks to the support of our partners, this new scheme will reduce flood risk to a further 200 homes.

Tom Tugendhat, MP for Tonbridge and Malling said:

I'm delighted that we are making progress in securing better flood defences for Tonbridge and Hildenborough. This scheme protects over 1,400 properties and the sessions are a great way to learn the detail of the works taking place to protect us. I hope as many people as possible can attend.

KCC cabinet member for environment Mike Whiting said:

We know from the 2013/14 floods the devastation that communities felt when they were flooded from the River Medway. We are pleased that the Environment Agency has been able to develop this project to protect Tonbridge and Hildenborough, with KCC's support. I would urge people in the area to come and have a look at the plans for our joint scheme to better protect over 1,400 properties from flooding.

Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Nicolas Heslop said:

Knowing that we will be able to deliver much needed measures to increase the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and in turn reduce flood risk will see significant growth to business and property within communities along the River Medway and this will give peace of mind and a huge boost to those who have been affected by flooding in previous years.

Residents are invited to come along and find out more about the outline plans for the scheme at 3 drop-in sessions this month in Hildenborough and Tonbridge.

- Monday 19 November, 12.30pm to 7.45pm at:

Hildenborough Village Hall,
TN11 9HY

- Friday 23 November, 11am to 8pm
- Saturday 24 November, 10am to 2pm at:

Council Chamber Room,
Tonbridge Castle,
TN9 1BG

To attend please come along between the hours stated, there is no need to book.

[Press release: Tonbridge Hildenborough residents invited to flood scheme events](#)

The Environment Agency is inviting local residents, land owners and stakeholders to discuss plans for its scheme to better protect properties from flooding.