

PM launches review to boost connections across the UK

Faster road and rail links to Scotland, upgrades to Welsh railways and new connections between Great Britain and Northern Ireland are among the range of potential projects to be considered in first of a kind study into improving transport infrastructure across the United Kingdom, launched by the Prime Minister today.

Led by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, chair of Network Rail, the independent review will look at how to boost transport infrastructure across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England – improving connections, creating new ones, and bringing communities closer together to level up access to jobs and opportunities.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The United Kingdom is the greatest political partnership the world has ever seen, and we need transport links between our nations that are as strong as our historic bonds.

Quality transport links are the key to making sure everyone can access education, jobs and housing, helping businesses to grow and thrive and rebalancing opportunity fairly across our country.

As we build back better from the pandemic, Sir Peter's review will help make sure we have the right connections to support, sustain and strengthen our communities – to truly level up across the UK.

Working closely with the Devolved Administrations and local authorities and set to cover road, rail, air and sea links, the study will provide independent, honest advice on a wide range of possible options to improve the quality and availability of transport links across the UK, including by looking at the potential feasibility and economic case of options for:

- Reviewing air links within the UK
- Exploring the cost, practicality and demand for a new fixed link between Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Boosting road and rail links to Scotland
- Cutting journey times to North Wales by reviewing the Welsh railway network
- Improving major road links across the country, like the A1

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Connecting our towns, cities and communities through better transport links is at the heart of this Government's work to fuel

our economic recovery.

That's why we need to look at how we can improve the transport landscape across the UK, levelling up people's access to work and education, and bringing communities closer together.

I'm pleased Sir Peter Hendy will be leading this important review, using his years of knowledge and experience to help us assess how we can boost key transport links to strengthen ties across the UK.

Sir Peter brings extensive experience and knowledge to the role with over 45 years working in the transport sector – including as Chair of Network Rail and successfully running London's transport network during the Olympics.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE said:

Connectivity drives economic growth, jobs and housing.

Improving links across the UK on the basis of the wider economic benefits that increased investment will deliver will be of benefit to everyone in the UK, and I'm thus very pleased to lead this work.

The review will also look to the future – considering the role of future technologies and assessing environmental impacts of current and future infrastructure. Sir Peter will be expected to publish his final recommendations in Summer 2021, to include advice on how best to improve connections, and whether that includes the need to invest in additional infrastructure by the UK Government.

Today's announcement follows a recent pledge by the UK Government to bring forward funding to accelerate infrastructure projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – working with the devolved administrations, the UK Government will identify opportunities for 'spades in the ground' ready projects to help build up communities and create jobs quicker for people across the United Kingdom.