

Union connectivity review: final report

In October 2020, the Prime Minister asked Sir Peter Hendy to undertake a detailed review of how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life.

Since then, Sir Peter and his panel have engaged with a multitude of industries, individuals and institutions across the UK, and have drawn on their evidence, experiences and views to develop a set of recommendations. Today (26 November 2021), the recommendations are being published.

The UK government is extremely grateful to Sir Peter for his leadership of the review and to all the members of his advisory panel for their expert input. It is a thorough analysis of the current state of transport infrastructure in the UK and presents ambitious solutions to improving connectivity.

The [report published today](#) includes recommendations that the government should:

- design and implement a strategic transport network for the whole of the UK, with funding commitments targeted at parts of the network that require it the most
- upgrade the West Coast Main Line north of Crewe to improve journey times and capacity and to enable HS2 to better serve connectivity between Scotland and England
- seek to work with the Scottish Government to conduct an assessment of the East Coast rail and road corridor to determine appropriate investments for better connectivity between Scotland and England
- offer funding to upgrade the key A75 link to improve freight and passenger connectivity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- seek to work with the Welsh Government to develop improvements to connectivity between North Wales and North West England on the A55, M53 and M56 roads and on the North Wales Coast Main Line, utilising HS2 and electrification to better serve North Wales, and for connectivity with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- relieve congestion on the M4 South Wales and England corridor by upgrading and building new rail stations, supporting the Welsh Government's package of public transport improvements and easing capacity restrictions at the junction of the M4/ M5
- develop a package of measures to improve rail journey times and capacity between Cardiff and Birmingham and beyond
- improve connectivity to and from Northern Ireland through the development of a long-term pipeline of infrastructure investment, better rail connections to airports and by supporting the Northern Ireland Executive in their participation in the All-island Strategic Rail Review
- take measures to improve domestic aviation connectivity through revising subsidy rules, reducing tax and by intervening in the assignment of

slots at London airports

- secure better rail connectivity for freight across the UK with ports and freeports as they are established

Sir Peter was also asked to assess the technical engineering [feasibility of constructing a fixed transport link between Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#). The UK government would like to thank Professor Douglas Oakervee CBE and Professor Gordon Masterton OBE for their leadership of this work.

Sir Peter's work found that a bridge or a tunnel between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is feasible. But with today's technology and existing infrastructure, Sir Peter has concluded that the benefits would outweigh the costs. He is, therefore, recommending that further work on the fixed transport link should not progress beyond this feasibility study. We accept this recommendation – it is a visionary project whose time might come in future decades, but not now.

The government's levelling up vision can only be achieved if the transport system across the UK on which we all rely supports and drives economic growth, job creation and social cohesion.

The UK government wholly welcomes Sir Peter's report and invites the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to work closely with us, in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation, to consider the review's recommendations and to agree how a new strategic transport network for the whole United Kingdom and the vital upgrades highlighted by Sir Peter can be taken forward to strengthen transport connectivity for the benefit of all parts of the UK.

As we build back better, the government is determined to do so in a way that levels up across the UK, bringing communities across the country even closer together. Wherever you live in the UK, a connected local and national transport network will bring you closer to all the social and economic opportunities available.

Sir Peter's review is a landmark study along that path to a better-connected future. The UK government thanks him and his team for their excellent work. We will reflect on his conclusions, discuss them with our colleagues across the UK and aim to publish a full response to the review in early 2022.