

Union Connectivity Review plans overhaul to Welsh transport

- Prime Minister underlines importance of improving connections between Wales and the rest of the UK, as UK Government publishes Sir Peter Hendy's independent Union Connectivity Review
- Sir Peter Hendy recommends the development of a package of rail and road improvements to connections between North Wales and the North West of England.
- Prime Minister invites the Welsh Government to work collaboratively with the UK Government on projects that will deliver vital improvements to local and national connections.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has today (Friday 26th November) committed to forging and strengthening transport bonds that will create a more cohesive and connected United Kingdom.

As the UK Government publishes Sir Peter Hendy's final report of the Union Connectivity Review, the Prime Minister has underlined the importance of better connections – on both local and national transport networks – to bring all UK communities within closer reach of social and economic opportunities.

The Prime Minister has particularly welcomed, and intends to accept, the proposal for the creation of UKNET – a strategic transport network spanning the entire United Kingdom.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We must strengthen the rail and road links across Wales if we are to truly level up the UK– enhancing the connectivity of Welsh towns and cities and bringing communities closer together.

We will now reflect on Sir Peter Hendy's review, and through close working with the Welsh Government, boost key transport connections that will deliver for the people and businesses of Wales and more evenly distribute opportunity and prosperity.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps:

Modern, rapid transport links between Wales and England are not just vital for economic growth and spreading opportunity across these two great nations. They will create the ties that bind our communities closer together, ensuring our investment works for everyone across the United Kingdom.

I am indebted to Sir Peter for his work. We will consider his recommendations carefully, engage closely with the Welsh Government

and work collegiately to ensure these proposals deliver significant improvements, now and for the future.

Research carried out for the report has highlighted how important travel across the border between Wales and England is, with a large number of people travelling daily for work, services and leisure. The UK Government is therefore committed to ensuring that transport links in this region continue to serve everyone who needs them.

Sir Peter Hendy's proposals for Wales include the UK Government working with the Welsh Government to review the route connecting North Wales to the North West of England, which is a key link for both communities and businesses. He suggests that a package of improvements focused on this route should focus on better connectivity with HS2 and major electrification schemes, upgrades to the A55, the M53, M56, and improving onward travel to and from the island of Ireland, in a major boost for union connectivity.

Sir Peter Hendy has also advised the UK Government to support measures to reduce congestion on the M4 and provide targeted improvements at the junction of the M4/M5. He also proposes upgrading and building new stations on the existing South Wales Main Line, in what would be a major infrastructure overhaul for transport in South Wales.

He also recommends that the UK Government develops a package of railway improvements to increase connectivity and reduce journey times between Cardiff, Birmingham and beyond, which could include better rolling stock, timetable changes and enhanced infrastructure.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

Improving road, rail and other transport infrastructure so it is fit for the future is crucial to economic growth across Wales. Thousands of people travel between Wales and England every day so it is vital that we better connect our communities and increase opportunities for businesses and travellers.

Speeding up rail services, upgrading roads and boosting connectivity all form part of our plans to level up communities, strengthen the United Kingdom and promote the creation of new jobs in every part of Wales and the UK.

Independent Chair of the Union Connectivity Review, Sir Peter Hendy, said:

My recommendations provide comprehensive, achievable and clear plans forward to better connect the whole of the United Kingdom, leading to more growth, jobs, housing and social cohesion.

I welcome the enthusiasm shown by the Prime Minister and the Government to my final report and I look forward to their formal

response to my recommendations, which aim to spread opportunity and prosperity right across the United Kingdom.

The independent Union Connectivity Review was launched in October 2020, led by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, to undertake how a detailed review of the quality and availability of transport infrastructure across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life. Sir Peter collaborated with stakeholders from across the UK, including Wales, for the final Review.

The national recommendations published today include:

- The UK Government should design and implement UKNET – a strategic transport network for the whole of the UK, and commit to providing additional funding to improve the network, in particular the parts that are not performing well. with funding commitments targeted at parts of the network that require the most improvements;
- The UK Government should plan improvements to the network using multimodal corridors, which should be reviewed regularly and appraised on a wider economic basis in order to support government objectives such as appraised on their ability to support the levelling up and net zero agenda;
- The UK Government should support the development of sustainable aviation fuel plants in parts of the United Kingdom that are particularly reliant on aviation for domestic connectivity.

The UK Government will now carefully consider the Union Connectivity Review in detail. It has also invited the Welsh Government to work closely to identify the solutions which work best for the people of Wales and the rest of the UK, and make tangible and meaningful progress as swiftly as possible.