

National Infrastructure Commission: Call for evidence

APM background

The Association for Project Management (APM) is a registered charity with over 21,000 individual and 550 corporate members making it the largest professional body its kind in Europe. APM is committed to developing and promoting project and programme management through a wide range of activities including membership, qualifications, events and enhancing standards and knowledge in the profession.

About APM's call for evidence and background of respondents

APM held an online survey which was open to members and the wider project management community. Responses came from a wide variety of business sectors such as transport and logistics, consultancy and construction as well as a broad spectrum of roles including project managers, academics and company directors. The timing of the call for evidence reduced the opportunity for the fullest consultation, so this document presents an informal synthesis of responses received, rather than a formal statement of APM policy.

NIC Call for evidence

I Connecting northern cities

1) To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

Respondents felt that weaknesses in transport connectivity are currently playing a major role in holding back the development of enterprise creation and growth in northern cities. Job creation was also an area of concern in terms of connectivity with respondents noting that connectivity played some extent in regards to this issue. Housing was not a great issue amongst respondents, with most believing that connectivity had little or no impact on the northern housing market.

2) What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? All transport modes are open for consideration.

Some respondents noted that road users could be reduced by expanding the Manchester Metrolink into Cheshire which would primarily serve to support the Cheshire hinterland around Manchester. It was felt that Manchester Airport railway station has a useful range of services but the lack of parking, very limited pick up and no bike facilities, means it is impractical for many would be travellers particularly locals who have not flown into Manchester Airport. A railway link from Manchester Airport south connecting into the Manchester- Chester line, would considerably improve the access to the Airport from Chester and surroundings. Modern electrified rail services with fast and reliable commuter services are desperately needed throughout the north of England, both between and within cities. Rail connection to airports such as Leeds and Manchester are essential. Rail networks should also consider more reliable goods transport to take heavy goods vehicles off the road thus rail development should be prioritised over building new and enhancing existing roads.

All respondents felt that, although road transport will continue to be highly important, is important to note that it is only one form of communication and is currently close to maximum capacity. Respondents noted that by including on-line and virtual communication methods when considering infrastructure investments, it would be easier to identify the essential from the nice-to-have. It was felt that a policy of nationally driven localisation would create the capability for regions to identify and resolve their own transport needs which would speed up action and create a greater focus on sustainable regional needs.

In terms of funding, respondents believed that the current regulated privatised system in key transport modes exposes the taxpayer to all of the downside risk and the private sector to all of the upside risk. They considered whether it would be possible to run a multimodal tender where private and public sector bid on the same basis. It was felt that running a tender like this, with all costs truly pushed up front, allows for the different bodies real risk appetite to be shown, ensuring that a true cost can be identified and assessed appropriately.

3) Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

Respondents considered a number of potential corridors which they felt should be considered as priorities for early phases of investment. These included:

- The expansion of the Metrolink into Cheshire
- Hull and Grimsby (docks) to Leeds
- Leeds to Birmingham
- Leeds to Newcastle
- Manchester to Birmingham
- Manchester to Liverpool

4) What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

It was suggested that a strategy of regional empowerment could involve some type of pan-northern political body to make the decisions. This could potentially be headed by Ministers and include northern MP's and Councils with oversight from central government to ensure that national interests were not compromised when achieving only local gains. The advantage of such an approach would be centralised information and idea sharing which might stimulate growth with sustainable solutions conceived by the areas impacted by change. It was also felt that local employers should have a voice and thus involved in the funding solution.

Funding could be from a combination of central and regional potentially supported by fairer distribution of existing subsidies, possibly away from London, and by reducing road infrastructure development in favour of rail and by private contributions from rail operators as well as government capital and borrowing.

5) What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?

Respondents believed that both Leeds-Bradford and Manchester airports had the potential for expansion but require enhanced rail links and more long distance flights in order to reduce the need to travel to airports in the south east. All respondents noted that northern ports have an important role to play in terms of international connectivity over the next 20. Sunderland, Grimsby/Immingham and Hull were cited as potential models which would serve to support UK import and exports and hopefully help support a northern powerhouse built around engineering and advanced manufacturing. Success at these ports may also open the way for Newcastle or Middlesbrough ports to be further developed to respond to changes in demand and volume.

2 London's transport infrastructure

1) What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

Nearly all respondents believed that the UK is overly reliant upon London and the South East which has led to over-crowding, inflated property prices and increasing pressure upon its infrastructure and services.

Many also felt that this 'London centrality' fuelled unnecessary travelling into London whilst creating a lack of investment in the northern cities and elsewhere. Most respondents felt that incentives are needed to encourage people to move to other parts of the country to utilise the available resources and capacity in other UK settlements.

2) What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

Respondents only offered limited guidance in answering this question but many felt that large scale infrastructure developments could be diverted from London to northern cities.

3 Electricity interconnection and storage

1) What changes may need to be made to the electricity market to ensure that supply and demand are balanced, whilst minimising cost to consumers, over the long-term?

Many respondents noted that in the short term, local generation through wind and solar energy should be encouraged and supported, with some local storage and less reliance on the national grid. Demand management can only be assisted by improving housing stock and price incentives. Participants noted that the UK faces a major power supply shortage with poor resilience, lack of generating capacity and poor distribution. Most of the market questions cannot be addressed adequately until secure supply is achieved.

2) What are the barriers to the deployment of energy storage capacity?

Much household demand could be for low voltage, such as can be generated by solar energy and stored in batteries. Respondents suggested that new housing might have a low voltage distribution network for lighting and electronic items. For higher voltage storage, options were limited.

3) What level of electricity interconnection is likely to be in the best interests of consumers?

Respondents believed that one of the main issues is the fragmentation of the market which makes it impossible to coordinate interconnection. Participations considered that a larger grid may not be required if there were more localised generation and storage.

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