



Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation response to the National Infrastructure Commission call for evidence – 8 January 2016

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The Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) is a membership organisation representing over 13,000 people who work in the highways and transportation sector. CIHT members plan, design, build, operate and maintain best-in-class transport systems and infrastructure, whilst respecting the imperatives of improving safety, ensuring economic competitiveness and minimising environmental impact.

CIHT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) call for evidence. CIHT support the Commission's role in advising the Government on the identification of the UK's long-term infrastructure needs. CIHT's response is a wider comment on the work and remit of the NIC with a focus on transportation requirements, rather than commenting specifically on the initial areas of focus.

CIHT have consistently called for a National Transport Strategy, including in its published Manifesto¹. The benefits of a national strategy - one that sets out a long-term framework over a sustained period (with a 20-30 year time horizon) – are clear when it comes to determining infrastructure priorities in the context of the national economy. It is therefore important that in undertaking its initial work on transport connectivity in the north and major public transport requirements in London, the Commission does not prejudice the need to consider the relative priority of investment on this scale in other parts of England.

CIHT notes that the remit of the NIC is to evaluate infrastructure connectivity, investment priorities, city to city corridors and governance in the north of England. However, it is important to note the CIHT believe that a 'National' Transport Strategy should include the local road network and set out how the Strategic Road Network (SRN), rail, aviation and ports networks integrate with one another. Nearly all journeys begin and end on the local highway network and therefore must be considered in any evaluation of connectivity.

CIHT supports the need to take a co-ordinated approach to determining investment priorities for infrastructure in all its forms. There also is recognition of the inter-dependency between infrastructure and the extent to which this can result in changes in the demand for and nature of travel demand. A National Transport Strategy must take into account the work undertaken at sub-national and local level, as well as having a strong linkage to spatial planning considerations.

The NIC's Terms of reference set out the importance of establishing the evidence base and identifying the options available for the North of England. Much of this work has been carried out recently and published in 'Moving Forward: The Northern Way'². The work, which was completed by the Northern Way Transport Compact, set out the economic case for transport investment in the north. It provided detailed plans, comprehensive researched analysis whilst considering all modes of transport.

Skills

The remit needs an increased focus around the delivery of jobs and to address the skills shortage. This includes an understanding of who is responsible for tackling the shortage and how we are going to fill the jobs that will be required to deliver the proposed infrastructure.

¹ [CIHT Making the Journey – A Manifesto for Transport](#)

² ['Moving Forward: The Northern Way](#)



The development of skills is a key area of concern and one that should be carefully considered under the remit of the NIC. The recruitment, development and retention of the next generation is vital to deliver these ambitious plans. In a recent survey of CIHT's Corporate Partners, 96% of respondents anticipated having a skills shortage in the next few years.³

The NIC has the ability to establish the certainty that would help industry invest in skills and secure the pipeline of skilled engineers and professionals for the future. It is now crucial that the government works with industry to ensure the skills, capacity and capability to deliver this programme of work are available. It is an opportunity that should not be lost and CIHT recommends that it should be included in the call for evidence.

Sector needs certainty

Certainty, and continuity of investment over a sustained period is important if overall improvements to the network are to be delivered effectively and efficiently. This need for certainty applies both to the Government, "client" bodies and the wider supply chain of organisations working in the sector.

The fact that the Commission will develop its advice within the framework of affordability scenarios provided by the Treasury is welcome. However, it is essential that the assumptions and context within which those scenarios are developed is published by the Treasury before the Commission invites comments on its proposals.

The Treasury must also make it clear how the work of the Commission will be subsequently reflected in Government decisions relating to investment priorities. It must also show how it will be taken into account as part of established regulatory frameworks that are used to determine future levels of investment by public and private sectors.

Such clarity is essential to provide the certainty required by the supply chain side of the sector. This will enable them to invest in resource and capability to deliver the investment envisaged. We note the Treasury consultation launched on 7 January 2016 and will respond further.

The National Infrastructure requirements of the whole country, not just in the north of England and London, need to be confirmed and committed to quickly by all parties. Government at all levels needs to develop a robust pipeline of requirements for its supply chain in a form that allows them to innovate and invest over a period of time.

Certainty of investment over a sustained period will allow progress to be made in terms of developing a truly co-ordinated transport system, one that's networks are more resilient to disruptions – both planned and unplanned. Recent flooding and the temporary closure of the Forth Bridge has only served to highlight the importance of the UK's networks.

The NAO report 'Delivering major projects in government: a briefing for the Committee of Public Accounts'⁴ – states that a third of major government projects due to deliver in the next five years are rated as in doubt or unachievable unless action is taken to improve delivery. This further highlights the need for certainty.

Spatial strategy and planning

CIHT believes that an infrastructure strategy (including digital infrastructure), linked to a high-level spatial strategy will provide essential context for the Commission's work. There needs to

³ [Routes to Diversity & Inclusion, CIHT 2015](#)

⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/delivering-major-projects-in-government-a-briefing-for-the-committee-of-public-accounts/>

be an integrated approach from Government (national, sub-national and local) agencies that extends beyond the electoral cycle to produce a long-term spatial strategy that links the future transport needs of the country.

CIHT's response to the National Planning Policy Framework⁵ highlighted the importance of effectively integrating planning and transport to ensure that the objective of delivering sustainable growth is realised. The best infrastructure planning in the world will not deliver this outcome if we do not consider at the same time the need for changes and improvements to the National Planning Policy Framework in order to facilitate better and timely delivery.

CIHT supports the expectation that the Commission will look at future needs in the round. However, this has to be set within the context of an overview of future housing requirements expressed in spatial terms. In this regard it is essential that any assessment of infrastructure needs, including these initial pieces of work, must look to balance investment across all networks and regions so as to maximise the efficiency of both public and private investment. As it stands the dividing up of the three national challenges as set out in this call for evidence already creates division/ separation of an overall strategy.

The current aim of an extra 1 million homes in this parliament, alongside provision of social infrastructure to support this extra provision will rely fundamentally on integrating spatial and transport planning. The aims of productivity and automatic planning permission for brownfield sites runs the risk of not fully considering how such schemes integrate with transport provision. This could miss opportunities for ensuring adequate public transport and particularly walking and cycling: important given the health challenges the UK faces.

The Commission should consider this when addressing the question of which corridors demand investment (particularly regarding public transport, including bus provision with walking and cycling).

Connectivity

Improved connectivity is vital to enabling growth. Clarity and certainty in terms of strategic planning will produce greater confidence amongst investors, business and housing (developers). Cities, towns, villages and rural communities all contribute to the success of the UK economy, increasingly so as the implications of the new digital economy challenge the traditional 'agglomeration model'. The CIHT Futures⁶ project will help set out the need to adopt a new approach to strategic planning, one that embraces a scenario based planning approach.

CIHT accepts that weaknesses in connectivity is holding back northern city regions in terms of jobs, enterprise creation, economic growth, and housing. However these factors equally apply to the rest of the UK and it is therefore important that investment priorities in one area of the country are determined only having taken into account the relative benefit compared to investment made elsewhere.

East west connectivity is poor and the government's recent decision to pause the trans-Pennine electrification from York to Manchester is an example of further uncertainty affecting the process of delivery.

⁵ [CIHT response to the National Planning Policy Framework](#)

⁶ [Future Uncertainty in Transport – Understanding and Responding to an Evolving Society, CIHT 2015 - 16](#)



Cost effective infrastructure investments

To understand what cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could help to address weaknesses in the North, CIHT would highlight [Moving Forward the Northern Way 2011](#). This set out many of the needs of transport in the north and now that Transport for the North has been established, refinements to this can be made as appropriate by regional bodies.

Governance

With regards to the forms of governance which would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, CIHT support the devolution of powers. The overriding aim of devolution should be to ensure infrastructure provision meets the needs of all users, from a personal and business perspective. CIHT has suggested the following approach that should be followed to ensure users' needs are met. The Commission should recommend how this or a similar approach should be instigated.

- Identify the different types of users who are reliant on infrastructure. As well as different users of infrastructure, these user groups could include, adjacent communities, non-users of the network, the environment, heritage and the asset itself.
- Identify the different purposes that the asset is required to deliver to different user groups.
- Analysis to confirm how which network will best meet the different purposes identified and to identify what investment is required to meet those different purposes of all users.
- Confirm the wider benefits that will arise from meeting the needs of all user groups and thereby define the Value for Money of the investment.
- Identify areas where investment in other modes will better meet the needs of users and identify the parties best able to deliver that investment.

However the full benefit can only be realised if there is successful connectivity, policy and collaboration between all the cities, regions and LEPs. This requires an equitable share on funding and infrastructure.

Security and resilience

The Commission should ensure that security and resilience issues are fully considered. The Commission should focus on the security aspects of infrastructure provision in terms of physical and cyber security. This is important when it comes to the potential security implications of moves towards open data and BIM models. It is recommended that PAS 119-5 2015 is strongly championed by the Commission to ensure such thinking is embedded within the infrastructure community.

Resilient and reliable infrastructure is key to increasing confidence across the country and attracting private investment. Issues such as flood alleviation and asset maintenance are high profile across the country and highlight the need for funding certainty and commitment. Lack of both will stifle growth.

Well connected and resilient infrastructure will provide realistic options for communities and will help deliver the housing shortages allowing for a sustainable housing plan (delivery) in the most suitable well connected areas.

London faces many economic and social challenges as it continues to grow rapidly (as does much of the UK).

Economic challenges include:

- lack of skills both in the sector and those in the decision making process,
- costs of commuting with increasing rail fares (public transport fares),
- overcrowding

Social challenges include:

- Managing the forecast increase in population,
- Growing inequality and divisions in the city,
- Housing shortage and a lack of affordable residential and commercial property,
- Health issues and air quality,
- An ageing population (this also applies nationally).

London has performed well on large scale infrastructure investments, and has led the way nationally in promoting cycling and helping deliver the health benefits that transport offers. However London should continue to focus on more sustainable travel solutions, pushing public transport (especially buses) and seeking to increase still further the levels of walking and cycling that take place.

Transport for London will also have to manage the phasing out of its subsidy from the Department for Transport (eventually being completely removed by 2020) as announced in the Autumn Statement at the end of last year.

The cost of housing and issues that this might pose, alongside uncertainty with the EU referendum mean that sourcing labour or the relocation of businesses could be an issue to contend with.

Addressing the problems with London Bridge and suburban rail services will also be one way of improving the customer experience of commuting in London.

CIHT support some of the conclusions from the 'Future Proofing London'⁷ report that recommends when prioritising infrastructure investment to avoid a focus on cost benefit analysis (which overlooks environmental and social benefits) when appraising plans. Other good recommendations include the proposal for creating orbital rail links and cycle super highways to connect outer London centres.

The established model of infrastructure provision in London, particularly the benefits of a multi modal transport administration, has shown the benefit of clear governance and planning in a regional context and this has merits for other parts of the country when considering further devolution measures.

Conclusions

- CIHT supports strategic planning for infrastructure, but the Commission must ensure that this has a spatial dimension, i.e. relation to housing, transport networks and other services.
- CIHT proposes that the Commission develops its advice in the context of affordability scenarios provided by the Treasury. It is important that there is clarity from Treasury

⁷ <http://www.atkinsglobal.co.uk/en-GB/group/sectors-and-services/services/future-proofing-cities/london>

on what those scenarios are and there needs to be confidence in subsequent decisions made by Government or other bodies are funded.

- Strategic planning for infrastructure needs to take place at scale – the sub-national level – and the Commission should be required to work with local partners on a sub-national scale.
- In looking to determine the priorities for one sub-national there is a need to do so by looking at the benefits/rate of return relative to other parts of the UK.
- The approach to identifying infrastructure requirements must not be based on an extension of previous approaches – the digital economy is changing the way business operates as well as changing the nature of travel demand. There is an opportunity if done correctly to embed changes in behaviour in the next generation.