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Sir John Armitt
National Infrastructure Commission
4th Floor
Finlaison House
15-17 Furnival Street
London EC4A 1AB

Transport for the North
2nd Floor
4 Piccadilly Place
Manchester
M1 3BN
Tel: 0161 244 0888

Dear John,

I am pleased to attach Transport for the North's response to the National Infrastructure Commission's call for evidence to support the development of a Rail Needs Assessment.

TfN members strongly welcomed the outcome of the HS2 review and the renewed commitment to building NPR and HS2 in full. Our evidence to the review set out why Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 are both essential in connecting the North for future generations to come, and how they will help rebalance the UK's economy.

Our Members also welcome the development of an integrated rail plan for the Midlands and the North. Our vision for rail in the North is clear and built from the solid foundations of the Strategic Transport Plan, the Long Term Rail Strategy and the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail. We have long called for a Northern Budget and Infrastructure Pipeline.

The outcome we need from the Integrated Rail Plan is an agreed, phased 20-year pipeline for major rail investment that can build the key rail markets, help grow the economy, reduce dependency on cars and stimulate investment in our people, businesses and places. That pipeline becomes even more urgent in the wake of the current Covid 19 crisis. Now is the time to provide long term certainty and invest in getting the economy moving.

The case for investment in rail in the North has been made and accepted by Government and has strong cross-party support. We are clear on what interventions are needed. The Integrated Rail Plan now represents that opportunity to consolidate planning and development activity as one process that can match the level of vision and investment needed.

Whilst the NIC's remit does not extend to governance and decision making, it is important to understand how the current arrangements have led us to this point. Our concern expressed to Government and to Douglas Oakervee's review of HS2 has been the design of schemes in isolation, both from each other, the rest of the rail network and with variable levels of involvement and engagement with TfN and our partners. The consequence of this is now clear – we have a number of urgently needed major infrastructure projects that are

not optimised, designed to different standards, and with different objectives. A clear plan for the whole of the network will avoid the risk of stalling at a time when we need to be moving forward. Yet we and our members continue to be frustrated by the current levels of access to information, role in decision making and isolated engagement with members.


Our key priorities for the Rail Needs Assessment follow the principles agreed by the TfN Board in March and which we have already communicated to the Secretary of State:

- Short term interventions should focus on putting the passenger first and addressing the short, medium and long term issues around reliability and resilience. They should be deployed in the most critical parts of the network where they are likely to benefit the most passengers and start to unlock connectivity in a wide diversity of markets now whilst building for the longer term. It is essential that we bring together the short and long term projects into a single pipeline.
- The IRP should be very clear about which rail interventions will be delivered, where and when in a clear sequenced order of priority that the North and Midlands can as an integrated network. In our response we have set out the comprehensive evidence assembled to date. In the summer we will bring forward an initial sequencing of work built around the emerging evidence from NPR and we will agree a set of priorities with Midlands Connect for connecting the key economic centres in both regions. That advice will be framed around three key principles:
 - Acceleration of business case development on NPR and early delivery of key HS2/NPR infrastructure.
 - Synergies – the key opportunities to align NPR, HS2 and TRU interventions, particularly in the Liverpool to York corridor.
 - Integration – between the major Northern/Midlands schemes, the classic network and existing “quick wins” in CP6 and CP7. The outcome needs to be a continuous pipeline of investment from now to 2040, starting with an immediate focus on the Manchester and Leeds hubs.
- It should also include consideration of freight capacity and connectivity, including to the Northern ports and airports. It should be closely aligned with road investment, local connectivity and active travel plans to meet the decarbonisation agenda.
- Finally, whilst this is outside the remit of the NIC, the final IRP should set out how the investment will be delivered, including the skills implications and the opportunities for regeneration of our towns and cities. It should drive the discussions on delivery vehicles for NPR and HS2 and the interfaces between rail delivery programmes, including the operational implications in line with the outcome of the Williams Review. We intend discussing those issues with Government in due course.

A final word on governance: TfN Board members have made it clear on numerous occasions that the North should have greater oversight and influence around the decision-making of transport investment, which have significant impacts on planning for the communities they represent.

We have strongly welcomed the constructive approach adopted to date by the NIC and looking forward to working with you closely over the coming months as you develop your advice to Government.

Yours sincerely,



Barry White
Chief Executive
Transport for the North