

A golden opportunity to deliver a nationwide infrastructure revolution for communities – CBI

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Commuter habits have changed significantly as a result of Coronavirus – and government investment in transport and infrastructure must evolve accordingly, says the CBI.

Significant government interventions have been needed to maintain commuter routes amid the decline in public transport demand, including grant support for bus services and emergency funding for railways.

The CBI has welcomed these measures, but in a new report published today, is now urging the government to use the upcoming Spending Review to make commuter connectivity fit for the future across the UK. This will mean going further to support the delivery of well-integrated investments that will create more flexible, reliable and low-carbon commutes nationwide.

The report, entitled *Connecting Communities* by the CBI and KPMG UK, argues there has never been a better time to reshape the UK's transport network to help level up across the regions and work towards a zero carbon future.

The paper outlines a series of recommendations to government on how to rethink the ways it invests in the

nation's commuter networks. The proposals include:

- Making longer-term funding allocations for regional infrastructure, to enable strategic planning and improved infrastructure maintenance.
- Taking a fresh approach to decision-making about investment in commuting infrastructure – focusing on how whole programmes of projects can interact to transform regional economies and meet national ambitions including net-zero.
- A sharper focus on driving delivery, as well as increasing investment, through improving planning capacity and capability within local areas.

These recommendations follow extensive consultation with infrastructure delivery firms, transport operators and the wider business community. They are designed to increase strategic clarity, focus funding and accelerate delivery of transport improvements.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief Policy Director, said: "Commuter behaviours have undergone a sea-change this year, and the likelihood is they will never revert to past patterns or previous numbers.

"This has created challenges for operators, but opportunities too for the UK to reassess its transport investment.

"Commuters of the future will want flexible, reliable and green travel options. If the UK is to deliver the world-class infrastructure needed to meet the changing patterns of demand tomorrow, it must embed long-term shifts into its policymaking today.

"The upcoming Spending Review offers a golden opportunity to improve the commuter experience, shift the dial on levelling-up and accelerate progress towards net-zero."

Richard Threlfall, Global Head of Infrastructure at KPMG, said: "While COVID-19 has had a significant impact on travel patterns, and lobbed a huge uncertainty factor into planning models, we should seize the opportunity to reform our approach to transport investment.

"This is our chance to move away from short-term, centralised, and siloed decision-making. Government policy and funding should support local authorities to develop multi-year programmes of investments that will drive local jobs, growth and quality of life, consistent with net zero and levelling-up objectives.

"Transport should be at the centre of these programmes, but integrated with spatial planning, housing and place-making strategies, so that ultimately everyone in the UK has the same life chances, regardless of where they happen to live."

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