

'Fragmented under-funding of transport must end in order to boost Union connectivity' says Transport for the North

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A holistic, sustainable and collaborative approach to transport investment is the key to enhancing the UK's connectivity and unlocking opportunities for people and businesses, according to [Transport for the North](#) (TfN).

In its submission to the Union Connectivity Review - with Sir Peter Hendy at the helm - the Sub-national Transport Body says a joined-up plan for cross-border investment is critical.

Done right, improved connectivity between the nations and regions of the UK will encourage trade and inward investment by improving links to the nationally significant ports and airports, and faster links between the economic assets that they serve. This would not only benefit freight on national and international routes, but would improve connectivity for passengers and businesses on regional and local journeys too.

"For too long transport has been under-funded and plans have been made in a fragmented way," said Tim

Foster, Interim Strategy Director at Transport for the North. “It is high time that changed.

“Through the Union Connectivity Review we need Government to set out a holistic approach to transport investment that ensures a sustained pipeline of projects, chosen based on a joined-up approach that involves local and regional partners, to truly support the levelling up agenda and enhance connectivity across the United Kingdom.”

The response, [available in full here](#), outlines six key opportunities that TfN calls for the Government to recognise in the Union Connectivity Review:

- The vital importance of Northern infrastructure investment in connecting Scotland, Wales and England – the North is unique in having direct surface and sea connections between all three countries.
- 2021 must be a pivotal year for rail investment with clear commitment to the delivery of both [HS2](#) and [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#) (NPR) in full through the Integrated Rail Plan.
- A clear investment plan must be put in place for key road connections, particularly the key cross-border routes of the M6/M56 in the west, A1 in the east, and alternative Welsh border routes such as the A41, A51, A55, A550 and A5/A483.
- Cross-border freight opportunities – both east-west connections from Northern Ireland via Holyhead and Cairnryan, and north-south via the North West and North East.
- The need to recognise the importance of different challenges among border communities.
- The need to strengthen cross-border relationships. TfN has already developed close links with Transport Scotland and established a new forum covering strategic West and Wales issues.

Tim Foster added: “The UK’s transport network is fragmented and congested. Having a clear investment plan for roads and rail that looks at the four nations as a whole should help strengthen our collective economies. This Review is an opportunity to deliver.

“For instance, investing in better rail links in the North will improve journeys and links for Scottish communities to those in Wales, the Midlands and the South of England. Likewise, those key roads that both link communities and are vital for freight movement from ports are critical to future prosperity and trade.

“Critically, we need the Government’s Integrated Rail Plan to interlink with the wider ambition to improve connectivity in the UK. Delivery of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail infrastructure at the earliest opportunity will release more capacity and better deliver long-distance journeys right across the North and to our neighbours. The resulting economic benefits will be absolutely critical as we recover from COVID-19.”

Photo credit: Transport for the North