

[Treasury Comprehensive Spending Review consultation – Railfuture response](#)

Railfuture is Britain’s leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation, campaigning for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. In our response, we have mapped our comments to each of the 6 priorities listed; our Rail Manifesto for 2030¹ may also be useful as an expansion of the topics below.

	Strong economic Recovery	Levelling up opportunity	Improved outcomes	Science & Net zero carbon	The UK & world	Management & delivery
<p>1 Effective and carbon efficient mass transit systems will be an essential factor in delivering a good economic recovery. These will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect people with jobs, allowing them to travel further for the best opportunities and increase the pool of candidates for businesses. This includes ‘levelling up’, by allowing people to travel regularly from areas of lower economic activity to areas of higher economic activity. Allow goods to be moved around the country in a carbon efficient manner. <p>Mass transit offers the ability to achieve movement more efficiently than personalised transport (eg autonomous vehicles) through many travellers (or goods) sharing a single consumption of carbon to achieve movement. For instance, a report by the International Energy Agency² comments:</p> <p><i>The much lower carbon intensity of rail (per passenger- or tonne-km) compared with most other modes of transport, means the rail sector already plays a key role in containing global GHG emissions. Looking forward, efficient electric motors and increasingly low-carbon power mixes could enable rail to contribute substantially to achieving zero-emission mobility from a well-to-wheel (WTW) perspective.</i></p> <p>Through its Decarbonisation Strategy³, Network Rail is developing, to use the vernacular, ‘shovel ready’ plans to deliver a decarbonised railway that can be initiated quickly to provide jobs, skills and scientific leadership.</p>	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
<p>2 As the UK recovers from Covid-19, the Railways (including the London Underground and Tram systems) will face considerable uncertainty as to when and how demand will return – and what the ‘new normal’ will be in the medium to long term. To ensure the Railway plays its necessary part in supporting a fast and effective economic improvement, it will be essential to ensure that:</p>	Y	Y	Y			Y

¹ <https://railfuture.org.uk/article1848-Railfuture-2030-manifesto>

² <https://www.iea.org/reports/the-future-of-rail> & <https://www.carbonbrief.org/eight-charts-show-how-aggressive-railway-expansion-could-cut-emissions>

³ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Traction-Decarbonisation-Network-Strategy-Interim-Programme-Business-Case.pdf>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The short term does not damage the long term – eg cuts in services, capabilities, investment and safety which mean the Railway cannot later support growth through insufficient capacity – resulting in both inefficiencies in other industries (eg cannot recruit staff from a sufficiently wide pool of staff) and increased carbon consumption (by the railway or elsewhere). The railway is structured with sufficient flexibility to be able to respond quickly as passenger numbers and travel expectations both change and expand⁴. It will be essential that the Railway can respond promptly with suitable fare promotions, with changes to fare structures to reflect changing working habits (eg two/three days a week at the workplace) and service changes. This will require getting the balance between government oversight and control of taxpayer monies on the one hand and the ability of local managers to make and immediately implement decisions to improve income and meet changes in passenger and freight user need on the other. <p>The new Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) announced this week can provide a framework for the above; it is essential that they, and the White Paper that will respond to the Williams Review in due course, deliver both the needed funding and the operational flexibility to allow operators to make best possible use of these taxpayer monies.</p>						
<p>③ In managing the railway and setting its funding sources (customer [passenger or freight] vs taxpayer) to ensure that the railway helps the UK’s goals in the most effective way, the following will require specific focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment to respond to climate change; last month’s Stonehaven fatal derailment is a very particularly acute demonstration of the need for this. Investment to improve the passenger experience – with a focus on the end to end journey and rail’s part in it, including communication and effective resilient / reliable service delivery, including recovery from disruption. Ensuring the railway is available for all – a combination of making the existing railway more usable for those of us with reduced mobility and/or special needs – and investing to expand the coverage of the railway to new places. Ensuring the railway has the capacity and operating features to allow the effective carriage of freight, including to and from ports for exports – and imports. Achieving high levels of decarbonisation, both within the industry and for all types of transport (see ‘1’). 	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
<p>④ The current Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that working from home is practical in many industries, but there is a growing body of evidence that people need to interact in person for some – but not all – of the time for the most productive</p>	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y

⁴ See, for instance, PA Consulting’s perspective: <https://www2.paconsulting.com/futureofrail.html>

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<p>outcomes – eg to collaborate and to improve information flow⁵. Where roles now only require intermittent attendance to the workplace, the distance between workplace and home can be increased without such a great impact on quality of life; these longer, less frequent, journeys are likely to substitute for more frequent shorter journeys for some workers, thus still requiring a very substantial capacity in mass transit⁶. It is important, though, to note that some workplaces (eg the life sciences & the NHS) require a high portion of workplace attendance and workplace support (cafes, coffee bars, entertainment etc) is an important part of the economy.</p> <p>It needs to be recognised that people in many industries will need to be encouraged to bias their work activity towards a greater portion of time in the workplace – this is likely to have substantial economic benefit⁷. The benefits of agglomeration (having many companies in the same industry in the same place [Old Street in London, Cambridge and Edinburgh are all examples]) also mean that more people need to travel to the same place at approximately the same time to achieve this benefit. To achieve this a mass transit infrastructure that has been invested in to have suitable capacity and delivery ability – and is subsequently operated in an effective manner – including being priced so it is seen as value for money to travellers (including those who go the workplace two or three days a week, not just those that travel every day) will be essential. The National Infrastructure Commission⁸ comments:</p> <p><i>While [Covid-19] outbreak has led to a, possibly temporary, reduction in journeys on the UK’s rail network, there remains a need for long term funding for transformative public transport projects that reduce journey times and improve reliability between and within key economic centres, while meeting changing commuting patterns.</i></p>						
<p>⑤ The Government’s existing commitment to HS2 is welcomed; it will provide much improved connectivity for many needs. The National Infrastructure Commission commented⁹:</p> <p><i>There are two important truths about railways. First, they are a means to an end. We build them to support connectivity between people and places, and to enable economic growth. Second, railways are often necessary but rarely sufficient to drive economic growth in advanced economies.</i></p>	Y	Y	Y	y		y

⁵ <https://news.efinancialcareers.com/uk-en/3004313/bankers-return-to-the-office-covid-19>

⁶ <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/15/business/coronavirus-london-relocation/index.html>

⁷ <https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/economics/insights/the-economic-impact-of-returning-to-the-office.html>

⁸ Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North - Interim report | <https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/RNA-Interim-Report-Final.pdf>

⁹ Ibid

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<p>In order to achieve the best levelling up of opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The benefits of HS2 should be made directly available to as many regions as possible through completion of all phases of the programme including to Crewe, Leeds and Manchester. There will need to be sufficient investment in the linked conventional railway to extend the benefits of HS2 – eg more capacity to connect London & Scotland – and to make best use of capacity freed up on existing conventional railways (eg London to Birmingham). It is essential to recognise that this does not improve all flows and that efficient connectivity is required for other flows as well – in toto (eg Northern Powerhouse Rail: – Liverpool to Leeds) and in part (Eg Leeds to Bristol). 						
<p>⑥ The UK has the opportunity to develop the UK Rail Industry as a global centre of excellence – it has a reputation for safety¹⁰ and has ambitious goals for decarbonisation (see above). Its own centres of excellence contribute to levelling up within the UK more than many industries (eg banking, pharmaceuticals) through provision of good employment in multiple localities that can face employment challenges, including South Wales, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East (this is over and above the way its services also help achieve this).</p>		Y			Y	
<p>⑦ The railway is a longer term activity, which will very much benefit from the efficiencies that arise from a stable and long term investment operating environment. For many years the railway investment programme has operated on a ‘feast and famine’ basis, which often leads to serious cost over runs and delays (eg Great Western Mainline electrification and Crossrail). For instance, a 30 year electrification programme¹¹ will allow retention and improvement of the knowledge and capabilities of the relevant staff, enabling maximum efficiency in delivery including, in particular, reduced unit costs.</p>			Y			Y
<p>⑧ It will be important to ensure that there is sufficient local involvement in the delivery and funding of projects and the definition of the services to be provided by the railway (timetable design, train design and capacity and station facilities etc). Within England the Sub-National Transport bodies such as TfN and TfSE need to be given sufficient devolved authority and funding and sufficient oversight rights. The operators of the railway (however that is to be structured) – the infrastructure manager(s), the passenger operators and the freight operators need to be both incentivised and empowered to operate and develop a railway that is reliable and highly responsive to passenger needs (and delivers effective and transparent usage of taxpayer monies and is subject to sufficient oversight from governmental bodies and other stakeholders).</p>		Y	Y			Y

¹⁰ <https://www.globalrailwayreview.com/news/84183/britain-railways-safest-europe/>

¹¹ <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1862>