

*Reply to:* M Southgate, Chair  
Hanover Court, Southdown Road,  
Shawford, Winchester SO21 2BY  
mike.southgate@railfuture.org.uk  
01962 713537

To: Devolution Priority Programme Consultation  
English Devolution and Institutions Team  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Email: [HampshireandSolentDevolutionConsultation@communities.gov.uk](mailto:HampshireandSolentDevolutionConsultation@communities.gov.uk)

Our responses to the consultation questions are given below:

**Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?**

Agree.

Railfuture Wessex is fully supportive of the proposal to introduce a Combined County Authority for Hampshire and the Solent because we believe it would provide a greater focus on public transport investment to support the economy of our area, encourage active travel and contribute to net zero goals.

We have seen the benefits that combined authorities can bring in other similar regions, for example:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority succeeded in funding a new station at Soham.
- West of England Combined Authority gave a vital cash injection to the Portishead Line Reopening project which had stalled due to a funding shortfall.

In Hampshire we have seen a number of proposals for rail investment falter in recent years, most notably: the South Hants Rapid Transit (tram) scheme for Fareham-Gosport-Portsmouth, the restoration a passenger service on the Waterside Line west of Southampton, and a new station at Welborne (north of Fareham) to support a 6,000 home development.

The rail network in our region has great potential to support economic growth and improve social outcomes, but has been held back over the past 50 years through inadequate funding and a lack of strategic focus.

**Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?**

Agree

The establishment of a Combined County Authority must come with commensurate levels of funding to bring about tangible change, otherwise the initiative would quickly lose credibility.

**Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?**

Agree

Although we have some concerns that the authority could be too “urban focussed” such that residents in deep rural parts of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight fail to perceive any benefits.

**Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?**

Agree

Connectivity between major population centres is poor compared to other UK regions and there is little attempt at bus-rail integration. There is also no combined rail/bus/ferry ticket offer for the Solent region (The Solent GO card omits rail and cross-Solent ferries). We consider that an elected mayor would have the authority to address these and many other deficiencies with some haste, making travel much easier for residents and visitors.

The mayor’s role in developing the railway, especially in facilitating easier ticketing, should include the Isle of Wight, Gosport and Hythe ferries as they provide essential links in the rail network and have historically had combined tickets with the railway.

**Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?**

Neither agree nor disagree

We have not addressed this question.

**Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?**

Agree

Our railway network has the potential to encourage car-free journeys and reduce the number of heavy freight vehicles on our roads. This will relieve road congestion with commensurate improvements to the natural environment. We have confidence that a mayoral authority will help to drive this modal shift from road to rail.

**Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?**

Agree

An elected mayor would have the authority to direct funding towards measures which reduce traffic in local neighbourhoods and improve travel choices, and will inevitably look towards greater use of the rail network as a way of achieving these goals.

### About You

#### 1. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation?

GOV.UK website

#### 2. What best describes your response?

I am responding on behalf of, or as a representative of, a business or organisation

#### 9. What best describes your organisation?

Voluntary and community sector or charity

Railfuture is Britain's leading, 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.

Wessex Branch essentially covers Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.

#### 10. What is the first part of the postcode where your business or organisation is based? For example, if your postcode is AB1 2CD, you would write AB1.

SO21