



Subject:	Union Connectivity Review - Update
Date:	14 April 2021
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The Union Connectivity Review aims to understand whether and how connectivity across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life, particularly in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
1.2	Following Council ratification, the Council's response to the Call for Evidence, as reported to the CG&R Committee on 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2021, was submitted to the review team in February 2021. This report updates the Committee on the publication of the Interim Report for the Union Connectivity Review.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the receipt of the letter confirming the publication of the Interim Report, the next steps and that the Union Connectivity Review is due to complete in summer 2021.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>As reported to CG&amp;R Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, an independent review for the UK Government (Department for Transport) led by Sir Peter Hendy was being undertaken to assess how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure connections across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life, with a specific focus on NI connections.</p>
3.2	<p>The Committee agreed to the response to the call for evidence, noting that the deadline for receipt of submissions was 14 January 2021. This was subsequently ratified by Council on 1 February 2021.</p>
3.3	<p>Subsequent to this, an Interim Report (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-connectivity-review-interim-report">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-connectivity-review-interim-report</a>) was published on 10 March 2021 and provides high level information on the preliminary transport and economic assessment across England, Scotland, Wales and NI along with a summary of the stakeholder views. It makes reference to the interdependencies that need to be factored in, including the New Decade New Approach commitments for NI. The report also outlines the proposed assessment methodology to be used by the review team to determine transport and economic baselines and how it will support the identification of future recommendations and highlights that the potential development of a pan-UK strategic transport network will be a key focus of the Review going forward.</p>
3.4	<p>The next stage of the review will take a future-focused view of transport in the next 20-30 years and how transportation can contribute to the UK's target of becoming net zero carbon by 2050, with a particular reference to the extent, essential domestic air travel can be made carbon neutral. The Interim Report also highlights that a discrete piece of work will be carried out to assess the feasibility of a fixed link between NI and the British mainland, including an outline cost and timescale for the link and associated works needed.</p>
3.5	<p>While the focus is on connectivity links between England, Scotland, Wales and NI, it acknowledges the role of integrated transport at a local level in contributing to overall</p>

connectivity. The integration of land use and transport planning at key nodes is also noted as contributing to environmental benefits and improved quality of life by supporting healthier transport options such as walking and cycling.

3.6 Some of the key issues that will be subject to further review are highlighted in the Interim report on page 4. The following are of specific note for Belfast and the region:

- Higher capacity and faster connection on the A75 from the ferry port at Cairnryan to the M6 corridor for freight and passengers to and from NI
- Faster and higher capacity connections from Belfast to North West, and to the Republic of Ireland (ROI), for passengers and freight, and to link with ROI plans for rail development
- Improved port capacity, road and rail capacity and journey times East/West across the Midlands and the North, for passengers, and to enhance freight capacity and connections from Ireland, and onwards to the East Coast ports for exports, post Brexit.
- Better air links to England to and from NI and Northern Scotland, including but not exclusively to and from London Heathrow, for worldwide connections for passengers and freight; including the appropriate rate of Air Passenger Duty for journeys not realistic by rail
- Connections to freeports when those are announced by the government and the devolved administrations.

3.7 These issues, along with other connectivity issues that may be identified in the next stages of the work will be reviewed in the final report.

3.8 The next steps for the review, which is due to complete in summer 2021, are outlined as follows:

- Develop proposals for a UK Strategic Transport Network covering road, rail, air and maritime
- Further analysis and review of the evidence collected to date and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders to better understand their views
- Transport connectivity appraisal, to include the links between transport connectivity and economic performance
- Commission social research to understand the perceived ease of travelling across the UK and associated barriers to travel. It will also assess the perceived impact of

	<p>connectivity within England, Scotland, Wales and NI, and across the union on opportunities, access to services and quality of life,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further research and engagement with subject matter experts to better understand how better connectivity can support an improved quality of life, increased social cohesion and a reduction in inequality across the UK.</li> </ul>
3.9	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	Appendix 1 – Letter to Respondees from Sir Peter Hendy