
UNION CONNECTIVITY REVIEW – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

28 January 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval of the response set out in Appendix 1 to the UK Government’s Union Connectivity Review and the submission of the response by 29 January 2021.**
- 1.2 The review is being led by Sir Peter Hendy CBE and is focused on gathering information and views from across the United Kingdom on the status of cross border strategic infrastructure and its ability to maximise local economic potential, improve quality of life and help deliver aspirations for net zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- 1.3 The proposed response set out in **APPENDIX 1** has been drafted, building on responses from Scottish Borders Council individually and with partners to recent Scottish Government consultations in relation to the National Transport Strategy, the reports of the Infrastructure Commission and Strategic Transport Projects Review 2, and is designed to be consistent with Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Deal.
- 1.4 The response therefore strongly reflects the aspiration to extend the Borders Railway, improve key trunk roads and invest in public transport connection to the north of England.
- 1.5 As of 1 January 2021, the UK is no longer part of the Trans-European Transport Network and the review requests parties to consider ‘if’ and ‘how’ this should be replaced.
- 1.6 A question is also asked in respect of the means to improving linkages to Northern Ireland.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Scottish Borders Council:-

- (a) Approves the draft consultation response provided in APPENDIX 1 and its submission to UK Government by 29th January 2021**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The union connectivity review is a UK Government consultation that will provide independent advice to create an overview of how connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom can support economic growth and improve quality of life. It is also examining ways to bring forward funding to accelerate infrastructure projects.
- 3.2 Much recent transport investment has been the result of an appraisal methodology that prioritises large numbers of travellers saving time spent on travel. This naturally favours travel to and from major conurbations. Sir Peter Hendy CBE is responsible for the review and has noted “this review is about – and I am interested in – what can be done to invest in and widen the benefits of growth and cohesion across the UK.”
- 3.3 The review will focus on transport’s ability to maximise economic potential and to improve quality of life, and will outline a series of specific recommendations that will individually and collectively contribute to this outcome.
- 3.4 The terms of reference for the UCR were published on 5 October 2020 and require the review to consider the following:
- the quality and reliability of major connections across the UK
 - likely current and future demand for transport links
 - the environmental impact of policy options (including with regard to climate change)
 - existing work completed by the government on cross-UK connectivity
- 3.5 In carrying out this study, the government asked Sir Peter to consult widely with:
- industry
 - the general public
 - relevant government agencies, including the Department for Transport (DfT) and its modal teams, Scotland Office, Wales Office, Northern Ireland Office and the National Infrastructure Commission
 - the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments, local authorities and their infrastructure commissions
- 3.6 This call for evidence set out in the consultation is the first opportunity for individuals and organisations to provide detailed information on the need for additional connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom and to direct the review’s attention to areas in which multi-nation journeys within the UK have the potential to be improved
- identify the importance of transport connectivity more generally
 - set out strategic opportunities for improvements in cross-border transport
- 3.7 It seeks information on the following topics:

- the importance of cross-border transport links to existing growth strategies
- appraisal methodologies and how these can support investment in cross-border transport
- specific journeys with the potential for improvement, and the cost and feasibility of these
- the potential development of a pan-UK strategic transport network
- non-physical changes to support cross-border connectivity such as service provision or financial support
- the social and environmental impact of additional or improved transport links
- the UK's ability to deliver a truly national transport strategy
- the feasibility and need for a fixed link between Northern Ireland and Great Britain
- any other relevant information

3.8 The call for evidence is part of a wider review of information and evidence gathering. Information from a variety of sources will form part of a wider understanding of cross-border transport connectivity and will begin to identify areas for further examination. No further detail has been provided on the wider review at this point.

3.9 The intention is to deliver an interim report in January 2021 and a final report setting out recommendations in summer 2021

4 SUMMARY OF DRAFT RESPONSE

4.1 The proposed response provided in **Appendix 1** sets out answers to the set questions in a manner that addresses the key national strategic transport issues but which also reflects the interests of Scottish Borders Council and the south of Scotland more widely.

4.2 The original consultation period ran from 5th October to 30 December 2020, but due to other competing priorities an extension has been granted to Scottish Borders Council to submit a response by 29 January 2021. This will also allow sufficient time for a joint response on behalf of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal to be agreed.

4.3 The proposed response to the consultation provide a distillation of information that has already been submitted to Government for the development of:

- Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy
- Borderlands Growth Deal Draft Economic Strategy;
- Borderlands Growth Deal Draft Energy Strategy;
- Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal Draft Regional Growth Framework;
- Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal response to the U19 free bus travel consultation;
- National Planning Framework 4 Call for Ideas, and

- Strategic Transport Projects Review 2.

4.4 The report addresses key connectivity issues for Scottish Borders and South of Scotland. These include:

- The importance of UK national infrastructure connectivity as an engine of economic growth and tool of net zero ambitions/green recovery
- Linkage between strategic spatial planning and economic strategies
- Extension of the Borders Railway
- The importance of north/south connections
- The importance of east/west connections, including across the south of Scotland
- The necessity of regional interconnectedness between the nation's cities and primary economic hubs and wider regions, including the south of Scotland.
- The need for a fundamental change to the assessment/appraisal approach for investment in infrastructure/connectivity which recognises the wider development needs and requirements of rural areas and regions
- Recognising the importance of digital and mobile connectivity.
- Inclusive growth, community wellbeing and sustainability.

4.5 Responses from the Campaign for Borders Rail and SEStran are referenced in the Council's proposed response and are appended to this report as respectively Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

4.6 Finally, the Council's proposed response notes the need for co-operation between the UK and Scottish Governments in delivering enhanced connectivity and that co-operation will require sensitivity to the division of responsibilities in the current devolution settlement.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

If a response is not provided by Scottish Borders Council it has the following effects:

1. Loss of opportunity to set out Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland priorities,
2. Inability for Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal to get a region wide response agreed at Joint Committee,
3. If there is going to be a replacement to of the Trans-European Transport network it is essential that we take every opportunity to highlight the importance of the extension to the Borders Railway and improvements to other strategic routes.

The approval of the draft response to the Union Connectivity Review will mitigate these risks.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

The report only highlights/collates current priorities in the Scottish Borders and South of Scotland, by referencing Strategies, Policies, Plans being delivered by Scottish Government, Regional Transport partnerships, Local Authorities, Borderlands Growth Deal, City Region Deal, South of Scotland Enterprise etc. Individual Strategies, Policies, Plans should contain IIA assessments which promote positive impacts.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

The draft response promotes the change of key national strategic routes focusing on inclusive growth, just transition, community wellbeing and delivering the net zero ambition.

5.5 Carbon Management

The draft response promotes the role that strategic routes will have on delivering the net zero ambition.

5.6 Rural Proofing

NA.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

NA

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

**Name
Title**

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Ian Aikman	Chief Planning & Housing Officer – 01835 826510
Michael Cook	Corporate Policy Advisor – 01835 825590
Graeme Johnstone	Lead Officer – Access & Transport – 01835 825138

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – SBC response to Union Connectivity Review

Appendix 2 - Campaign for Borders Rail response to Union Connectivity Review

Appendix 3 - SEStrans response to Union Connectivity Review

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Michael Cook can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at: Michael Cook, Corporate Policy Advisor
Michael.Cook@scotborders.gov.uk ; tel 01835 825590