

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT CALL FOR EVIDENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1

The National Infrastructure Commission (‘the Commission’) was established by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in October 2015, with Lord Andrew Adonis appointed as its interim Chair. The other members of the Commission are:

- Sir John Armitt (Deputy Chair)
- Professor Tim Besley
- Demis Hassabis
- Lord Heseltine
- Sadie Morgan
- Bridget Rosewell
- Sir Paul Ruddock

The National Infrastructure Commission is currently operating in interim form until it is formally established on a permanent basis in January 2017.

On 12 October 2016, the government published its Charter for the National Infrastructure Commission. The Charter states that the Commission is a permanent body that “will operate independently, at arm’s length from government, as an executive agency of HM Treasury”. The Commission will continue on an interim footing until it – and the Charter – formally comes into force. The National Infrastructure Commission is, and will remain, operationally independent throughout the process. As such, no distinction is made between the Commission’s interim and permanent forms.

It is functioning within the terms of reference laid out by the government, which set out a central responsibility for the Commission to produce a National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) once a Parliament. This document seeks views and evidence on behalf of the Commission, not government ministers.

1.2

The National Infrastructure Commission has been established to provide the government with impartial, expert advice on major long-term infrastructure challenges.

The government will provide the Commission with clear guidance by issuing a public remit letter, which will include a binding fiscal remit to ensure that the Commission’s recommendations are affordable. While the government will set the Commission’s remit (and the terms of reference for the in-depth studies that it undertakes), in all other respects it will have complete discretion to independently determine its work programme, methodology and recommendations, and the content of its reports and public statements.

1.3

The objectives of the National Infrastructure Commission are to: (i) support sustainable economic growth across all regions of the UK, (ii) improve competitiveness and (iii) improve quality of life.

2. CALL FOR EVIDENCE

2.1

The Commission is launching a 15 week call for evidence to provide input into the development of its National Infrastructure Assessment, and encourages all interested parties to submit evidence, ideas and solutions.

The Commission will produce an NIA once in every Parliament, setting out the Commission's assessment of long-term infrastructure needs on a 30-year time horizon with recommendations to the government. In completing the NIA, the Commission will build on the work of individual actors, including government departments, sub-national and regional bodies and regulators. The Commission will consider the demand and supply of infrastructure services, such as journeys or communication, as well as infrastructure assets, such as roads or fibre optic cables.

The Commission will cover economic infrastructure in the NIA but sectors will not be tackled independently from each other. The NIA will be developed by assessing the infrastructure system as a whole using a robust, common methodology to develop needs assessments that take account of strategic cross-sector considerations and resilience implications. In terms of the individual sectors, the Commission will cover: transport, digital communications, energy, water and wastewater (drainage and sewerage), flood risk management, and solid waste.

The Commission will publish a Vision and Priorities document in summer 2017. This will inform the full NIA, which will be published in 2018.

Submissions to the call for evidence are welcome across the full range of sectors and issues relevant to the NIA.

In order to provide assistance to respondents, the Commission has identified 28 key questions which it believes will be important to answer in order to understand the main infrastructure challenges facing the country over the coming decades. Respondents are not required to base their submissions around these questions, or to respond to the full set, but they may find them helpful in providing a focus on issues that are likely to be important in the assessment process.

Please note that this call for evidence is separate from a [call for ideas](#) currently being run jointly by the National Infrastructure Commission and HM Treasury to inform decisions on the Commission's next in-depth study or studies.

2.2

Those making submissions are asked not to exceed 20 sides of A4 paper in length, and are strongly encouraged to provide details of the evidence and data which support their positions. This will enable the Commission to understand more fully the basis on which those conclusions have been reached. The Commission will work with key local and national stakeholders as part of an open and transparent programme of engagement to support the call for evidence. In addition to its publications and the consultations that it carries out, the Commission's engagement tools also include the use of expert advice and challenge (through establishing panels and hosting roundtables) along with regional roundtables, sectoral seminars and social research.

2.3

As part of this call for evidence, the Commission also invites local government, LEPs and other organisations to share plans that are relevant to nationally strategic infrastructure, to help inform the evidence base for the NIA.

3. CONTEXT

3.1

The National Infrastructure Commission has committed to producing a National Infrastructure Assessment once in every Parliament, setting out the Commission's assessment of long-term infrastructure needs with recommendations to the government.

3.2

In May 2016, the Commission launched a consultation, seeking views on the process and methodology of the NIA. The consultation received over 170 responses from a diverse range of stakeholders. The Commission has published its [response to the consultation](#) alongside this call for evidence.

3.3

This call for evidence is the next step in the Commission's work to produce its first NIA. The Commission's consultation on the scope and methodology of the NIA received a large number of informative responses, and the Commission will continue to engage with stakeholders, including industry, business, central and local government, regulators, academia, civil society and the wider public during this call for evidence and after it closes.

3.4

The input received through the call for evidence will be assessed by the Commission, alongside other evidence, to identify long-term infrastructure challenges and highlight priority areas for action over the medium-term. The conclusions of this process will be set out in a Vision and Priorities document to be published in summer 2017. This will form the basis for a public consultation process, which will then inform the full NIA, to be published in 2018.

4. QUESTIONS

The questions that the Commission has identified to assist respondents in focusing their submissions to this call for evidence are set out below:

Cross-cutting issues:

1. What are the highest value infrastructure investments that would support long-term sustainable growth in your city or region?
Note: this can apply to national, regional or local infrastructure, where you consider it would best support sustainable growth in your city or region in practice. Considerations of “highest value” should include benefits and costs, as far as possible taking a comprehensive view of both. “Long-term” refers to the horizon to 2050 and should exclude projects that are already in the pipeline.
2. How should infrastructure most effectively contribute to the UK’s international competitiveness? What is the role of international gateways for passengers, freight and data in ensuring this?
3. How should infrastructure be designed, planned and delivered to create better places to live and work? How should the interaction between infrastructure and housing be incorporated into this?
4. What is the maximum potential for demand management, recognising behavioural constraints and rebound effects?
Note: “demand management” includes smart pricing, energy efficiency, water efficiency and leakage reduction. “Rebound effects” refer to the tendency for demand to increase when measures aimed at reducing or spreading demand also lead to lower prices or reduced congestion, undoing at least some of any demand reduction. For example, if smart meters reduce the cost of electricity in off-peak periods, this could lead to greater energy consumption overall, where a large number of individuals or firms take advantage of these lower prices by increasing their total usage.
5. How should the maintenance and repair of existing assets be most effectively balanced with the construction of new assets?
6. What opportunities are there to improve the role of competition or collaboration in different areas of the supply of infrastructure services?
7. What changes in funding policy could improve the efficiency with which infrastructure services are delivered?
Note: by “funding”, the Commission means who pays for infrastructure services and how, e.g. user charges, general taxation etc.
8. Are there circumstances where projects that can be funded will not be financed? What government interventions might improve financing without distorting well-functioning markets?

Note: projects that “can be funded” but “will not be financed” refers to projects that can be paid for, but where the upfront costs of construction cannot be raised at an efficient price and/or with an appropriate risk sharing balance between the different parties. General government financing policy (i.e. the issuance of gilts) is out of scope.

9. How can we most effectively ensure that our infrastructure system is resilient to the risks arising from increasing interdependence across sectors?
Note: this includes resilience against external risks and/or problems that arise in one or more parts of the system.
10. What changes could be made to the planning system and infrastructure governance arrangements to ensure infrastructure is delivered as efficiently as possible and on time?
11. How should infrastructure most effectively contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment?
12. What improvements could be made to current cost-benefit analysis techniques that are credible, tractable and transparent?
Note: “credible” improvements are those that generate results that are in line with robust evaluation findings for comparable schemes. “Tractable” improvements are those that can generate usable quantitative outputs. “Transparent” improvements are those that do not rely on ‘black box’ modelling and assumptions.

Transport:

13. How will travel patterns change between now and 2050? What will be the impact of the adoption of new technologies?
Note: “travel patterns” include both the frequency and distance of trips taken, as well as the mode of transport used. This covers both personal and commercial travel, including freight.
14. What are the highest value transport investments to allow people and freight to get into, out of and around major urban areas?
Note: “high value transport investments” in this context include those that enable ‘agglomeration economies’ – the increase in productivity in firms locating close to one another.
15. What are the highest value transport investments that can be used to connect people and places, as well as transport goods, outside of a single urban area?
Note: this includes travel in and between rural areas, as well as between urban areas and international travel.
16. What opportunities does ‘mobility as a service’ create for road user charging? How would this affect road usage?

Digital communications:

17. What are the highest value infrastructure investments to secure digital connectivity across the country (taking into consideration the inherent uncertainty in predicting long-term technology trends)? When would decisions need to be made?
18. Is the existing digital communications regime going to deliver what is needed, when it is needed, in the areas that require it, if digital connectivity is becoming a utility? If not, how can we facilitate this?
Note: the existing “regime” refers to the current market, competition and planning frameworks. “Digital communications” includes both fixed and mobile connectivity.

Energy:

19. What is the highest value solution for decarbonising heat, for both commercial and domestic consumers? When would decisions need to be made?
20. What does the most effective zero carbon power sector look like in 2050? How would this be achieved?
Note: the “zero carbon power sector” includes the generation, transmission and distribution processes.
21. What are the implications of low carbon vehicles for energy production, transmission, distribution, storage and new infrastructure requirements?

Water and wastewater (drainage and sewerage):

22. What are most effective interventions to ensure the difference between supply and demand for water is addressed, particularly in those parts of the country where the difference will become most acute?
Note: “demand” includes domestic, commercial, power generation and other major sources of demand.
23. What are the most effective interventions to ensure that drainage and sewerage capacity is sufficient to meet future demand?
Note: this can include, but is not necessarily limited to, governance frameworks across the country.
24. How can we most effectively manage our water supply, wastewater and flood risk management systems using a whole catchment approach?

Flood risk management:

25. What level of flood resilience should the UK aim to achieve, balancing costs, development pressure and the long-term risks posed by climate change?
26. What are the merits and limitations of natural flood management schemes and innovative technologies and practices in reducing flood risk?
Note: “innovative technologies and practices” can include, but is not necessarily limited to, property level resistance and resilience, temporary defences, advances in predictive asset maintenance and innovative construction materials.

Solid waste:

27. Are financial and regulatory incentives correctly aligned to provide sufficient long-term treatment capacity, to finance innovation, to meet landfill and recycling objectives and to assign responsibility for waste?
28. What are the barriers to achieving a more circular economy? What would the costs and benefits (private and social) be?
Note: A “circular economy” is an alternative to a traditional ‘linear economy’ (i.e. make, use, dispose) in which products are designed and packaged to minimise waste, and resources are kept in use for as long as possible, e.g. through re-use, recycling and greater recovery of materials through the waste management process.

5. HOW TO RESPOND

5.1

The evidence submitted will inform the Commission's understanding of the wider issues surrounding the review we have been asked to undertake.

5.2

Submissions of evidence should be no longer than 20 sides of A4 paper and should be emailed to NIAEvidence@nic.gsi.gov.uk.

5.3

Please provide submissions and evidence by Friday 10 February 2017.

5.4

Evidence will be reviewed thereafter by the Commission. If further information or clarification is required, the Commission secretariat will be in contact with you.

5.5

In exceptional circumstances we will accept submissions in hard copy. If you need to submit a hard copy, please send your response to the Commission Secretariat at the following address:

NIA Call for Evidence
National Infrastructure Commission
11 Philpot Lane
London
EC3M 8UD

5.6

We may publish any submissions made; if you believe there is a reason why your submission or any part of your submission should be considered confidential, please provide details.

5.7

The Commission is subject to legal duties which may require the release of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or any other applicable legislation or codes of practice governing access to information.

