



# Infrastructure, done differently

The impact of the first National Infrastructure Assessment

**NATIONAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
COMMISSION**

Better infrastructure for all

July 2021

## The quality of the Assessment process is reflected in the extent to which it has informed policymakers' thinking

*"The National Infrastructure Strategy ... is a response to the outstanding work done by the National Infrastructure Commission in assessing what the country needs."*

**Prime Minister Boris Johnson MP's foreword, National Infrastructure Strategy, November 2020**

*"Since the National Infrastructure Assessment was published, significant progress has been made against the Commission's recommendations ... the government is partially or fully endorsing over 80 per cent of the recommendations."*

**Financial Secretary to the Treasury Jesse Norman MP, Foreword, government response to the Assessment, November 2020**

## A clear vision for the future

The Commission was established to help change how the UK plans for its long term infrastructure needs. To encourage a shift away from the stop-start, short term approach which have all too often been the norm.

Three years ago, on 10 July, we published our first – and the country’s first – [National Infrastructure Assessment](#).

A lot has happened since.

The government has published its first National Infrastructure Strategy, in response to our Assessment.

The country is now committed by law to delivering net zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 in the face of the urgent challenge of addressing, and dealing with the impacts of, climate change.

The UK’s largest current infrastructure project, HS2, has broken ground.

More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has turned the nation upside-down and prompted discussion about infrastructure’s role in ensuring we recover, and recover well.

The Commission is proud of its work on the Assessment and the positive ways in which it has influenced changes in the approach to infrastructure policymaking and planning. Some of these are highlighted in this pamphlet.

The importance of infrastructure to our economy and our daily lives is now being discussed more widely than any time I can recall. And that can only be a good thing.

Politicians at all levels are keen to understand how infrastructure can support sustainable growth, competitiveness and improve quality of life for all parts of the country. How we help make that happen remains our goal.

As work starts on the second National Infrastructure Assessment, we thought we would recognise a few of the ways in which our work has already influenced infrastructure planning and development.



**Sir John Armitt, Chair**

## Driving the decarbonisation of road transport

Helping drivers switch from petrol and diesel to electric power is vital if the UK is to meet its 2050 net zero goals. That requires a revolution in the UK's charging infrastructure.

In 2018, the National Infrastructure Assessment recommended government prioritise a rollout of charging infrastructure, sufficient to allow 100 per cent of new car sales to be electric by 2030: "Charge up Britain" was its message.

Since then, the government has brought forward the date for phasing out of petrol cars and vans from 2040 to 2030. Government must now set out a comprehensive delivery roadmap for electric vehicle charging infrastructure to meet growing demand.

# 300%

Growth in number of ultra-rapid public charging points in UK, 2018-2021

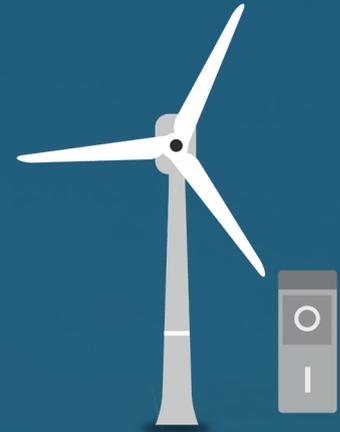


Source: zap-map.com: ultra-rapid chargepoints in 2018 = 340; 2021 = 1036 (as of 22 June 2021)

## A decisive shift towards low carbon electricity generation

The Assessment called for the government to accelerate the transition to a highly renewable electricity mix. Progress since has allowed us to recommend raising our recommended target for renewable generation by 2030 from 50 to 65 per cent.

The government's own [National Infrastructure Strategy](#) and [Energy White Paper](#) in 2020 committed it to delivering 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030, and government will once again use its contracts for difference policy to support the deployment of onshore wind and solar, in line with Assessment recommendations.



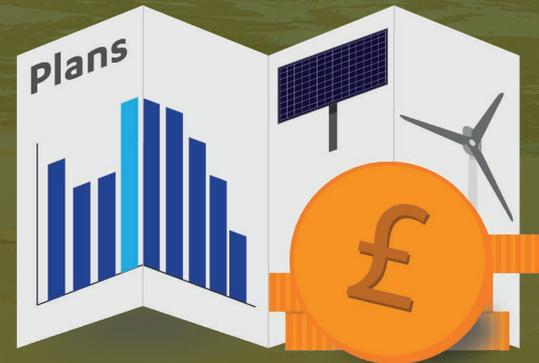
**£60/MWh**  
to  
**£40/MWh**

Fall in the price of  
offshore wind

## The creation of the UK Infrastructure Bank

With access to the European Investment Bank at risk following Brexit, the Commission made clear a new operationally independent body to catalyse much-needed private investment was essential. It would support investment in cases of market failure, promote innovation, and act as a centre of excellence on infrastructure project development, procurement and delivery.

The creation of the new UK Infrastructure Bank was announced by the government in its first National Infrastructure Strategy, in line with the Commission's proposal, with a remit focusing on tackling climate change and supporting regional and local economic growth. Based in Leeds, it began operating in June.



## Commitments to protect England's water supply

With a one in four chance of serious drought between now and 2050, our water resources are under tremendous pressure.

The Assessment showed that **4,000MI/day** of extra water was needed by 2050 – the equivalent of well over 22 million bath tubs of water. Cutting leakages by half was crucial to achieving this, along with investment in new capacity and reducing demand.

The government's National Policy Framework for water in 2020 adopted our leakage target and there is now a strong momentum across the sector to evolve water-resource planning in line with the Assessment's recommendations.

**137  
million  
litres**

Reduction in leakage in  
England's water system  
2018/19 to 2019/20



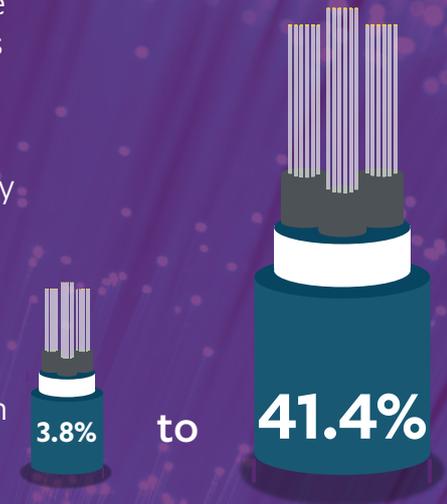
Source: Environment Agency (2020), Water and sewerage companies in England: Environmental performance report for 2019

## Building fast, reliable digital connectivity

Enabling everyone to harness the full benefits of a digital economy means creating a full fibre broadband network across the whole country. The Assessment called on government and regulators to create a nationwide connectivity plan to ensure that full fibre connectivity covered all homes and businesses by 2033.

There has been a rapid expansion in the coverage of gigabit-capable broadband, driven by network competition and a more supportive policy and regulatory environment.

In its 2020 Budget, the government committed £5bn to subsidise the rollout of full fibre broadband to the hardest to reach 20 per cent of UK premises, in line with the Assessment's recommendation. The regulator Ofcom has since produced a statement promoting network competition in fibre networks, reflecting the Commission's thinking.



Increase in UK premises with access to gigabit cable broadband<sup>1</sup>

## Creating better infrastructure through good design

The Assessment highlighted how good infrastructure design saves money, reduces risk, adds value and supports environmental net gain and create a legacy that looks good and works well. The Commission's Design Group subsequently published the [Design Principles for National Infrastructure](#) to ensure all major projects improve quality of life across our communities and enhance the country's natural and built environment.

In its National Infrastructure Strategy, the government committed to embedding good design in infrastructure projects, aligned with these principles. Board-level design champions, supported by design panels, should be appointed to all major projects and work closely with the Design Group on embedding the principles.



## The way ahead

Of course, there is much more to be done.

In highlighting some areas of progress, the Commission also reiterates the need for urgent further work to set out the detailed policy levers and milestones for a number of the areas of ambition set out in the government's [National Infrastructure Strategy](#).

Our [Annual Monitoring Report 2021](#) set out some immediate priorities. 2021 must be a year of turning policy goals into delivery plans. Progress so far has been limited.

While we embark on work for the second National Infrastructure Assessment, the Commission will continue to keep up the pressure in a constructive fashion to ensure the UK's infrastructure is well placed to help our economy and society face the challenges and opportunities of future decades.

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