

National Infrastructure Commission
Post-election statement – priority actions for Government

When planned well, infrastructure can make a real and lasting positive impact on communities, on local economies and on the country at large. Infrastructure schemes such as a third runway at Heathrow, and HS2 and HS3, can support a stronger economy and forge new jobs and trade.

The UK has the potential to become a world leader in smart energy networks and ultrafast broadband, boosting our international competitiveness. And an ongoing commitment to renewable power is central to the long-term sustainability of our energy systems.

These infrastructure projects will only happen if the government pushes them forward relentlessly. The UK boasts some highly successful major projects in recent years, including the 2012 Olympics, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the current Crossrail scheme linking east and west London. But too often the process of agreeing and delivering projects is characterised by delay, backtracking and instability. We cannot allow this to continue, particularly in view of the inevitable uncertainty for international investors during the Brexit negotiations.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) is therefore highlighting the ‘top 12’ major priorities which require urgent action. In each case, there is already a commitment in principle to the project or policy. But without timely ministerial decisions over the next year, progress will stall and in some cases projects or investments may collapse entirely. For each of these, the key forthcoming decision points are identified. The NIC intends to issue regular updates over the coming months, highlighting progress or lack of it against these decision points.

These are the ‘top 12’:

1. Heathrow 3rd runway.

The Government should complete all preparatory work needed for a Parliamentary decision to be taken on a third runway for Heathrow airport, and progress other aviation policy decisions to boost air traffic capacity, particularly in the south-east of England. This requires:

- A House of Commons vote on any finalised National Policy Statement on airports capacity in the south-east of England no later than May 2018;
- A government response to the consultation on UK airspace published no later than October 2017;
- A timetable for agreeing an updated national aviation strategy published no later than September 2017.

2. High Speed 2

The Government should introduce the hybrid Bill for phase 2a (Birmingham to Crewe) of High Speed 2 and publish the finalised route for Phase 2b (Crewe to Manchester

and Birmingham to Leeds), including connections with High Speed 3, and let the major work contracts for the project, by the end of July 2017.

3. High Speed 3 (linking the major northern cities from Liverpool to Newcastle and Hull)

The Government should publish by the end of 2017 a single integrated plan for the first phase of High Speed 3, incorporating proposals for electrifying and upgrading the trans-Pennine (Manchester to Leeds) rail route, plans for the northern sections of HS2, and plans for the redevelopment of Manchester Piccadilly station, as set out in the NIC's *High Speed North* report.

4. Crossrail 2 (linking north-east, central and south-west London)

The Government should by the end of 2017 publish a plan, agreed with the Mayor of London, for the funding and phased construction of Crossrail 2, and for securing the necessary parliamentary consent, taking account of the recommendations in the NIC's *Transport for a World City* report.

5. Eastern crossings of the River Thames

The Government should:

- take a decision on planning permission for the Silvertown Tunnel by the end of October 2017;
- announce its financing strategy for the new Lower Thames Crossing (to relieve the congested M25 Dartford Crossing), and begin the Environmental Impact Assessment process, no later than September 2017, paving the way for consultation on the detailed route in 2018 and the submission of the development consent application in 2019;
- agree a policy with the Mayor of London for the next road crossing of the Thames in East London by the end of 2017, to enable substantial new housing development.

6. Flexible power systems

The Government should publish its plan for smart energy systems, as set out in its response to the NIC's *Smart Power* report, including the actions it will take to enable greater deployment of electricity storage, interconnectors and demand flexibility, no later than September 2017.

7. Renewable energy

The Government should publish its firm forward plans for supporting renewable energy, at least to 2025, including the use of the remaining funds from the £730m agreed in the last Parliament, by October 2017, and specific longer-term goals in the Autumn Budget.

8. Decarbonisation of energy

The Government should publish its strategy for the decarbonisation of energy, including its emissions reduction plan, no later than October 2017, and set out its trajectory for the future level of the "carbon price floor" in the Autumn Budget.

9. Hinkley Point C

The Government should by the end of the year publish a strategy and timetable for replacing the services provided by the UK's membership of Euratom to support the timely delivery of the new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station and any future nuclear projects.

10. Broadband and mobile

The Government should, by the end of 2017, publish its final broadband Universal Service Obligation decision and set out minimum acceptable standards for mobile coverage, based on metrics which genuinely reflect where people live, work and travel. These should be followed within six months by a credible delivery plan, setting out the concrete steps that the Government will take to ensure they are met.

11. 5G mobile

The Government and Ofcom should take the following steps by the end of 2017 to implement the recommendations from the NIC's *Connected Future* report and prepare for the widespread deployment of 5G technology from 2020:

- Complete the auction of 5G spectrum in the in the 3.4 – 3.6 GHz range and publish a timetabled plan to complete by the end of 2019 the auctions of other key 5G spectrum bands;
- Set out a comprehensive plan to enable the rollout of 5G services, including proposals for providing access to public sector buildings, land and other assets, and the commercial models for delivering high quality mobile services directly alongside the motorway network and main railway lines.

12. Water and flood defence infrastructure

The Government should finalise the Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat by the end of September 2017 and publish its review setting out proposals for the effective management of surface water flooding by the end of 2017.

Modernising and upgrading the UK's infrastructure is not only a job for central Government. Regional leaders must also play their part. An urgent 2017 priority for the new metro Mayors and other leaders of major local authorities is to identify strategic infrastructure priorities for their regions/areas. The National Infrastructure Commission will provide support to help the major city-conurbations and regions develop their plans and to facilitate constructive engagement with central government. More detail on this will be set out in the NIC's National Infrastructure Assessment 'Vision and Priorities' document later this year.