

Emailed to: appgsoutheast@secouncils.gov.uk

Friday 24th February 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Transport for the South East's response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East's call for evidence

I am writing to you as lead officer for [Transport for the South East](#) (TfSE) to provide a response to the call for evidence regarding 'The South East and 'Global Britain': what role for transport infrastructure in underpinning Britain's plan to trade and grow?

TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB) bringing together leaders from across the local government, business and transport sectors to speak with one voice on our region's strategic transport needs. Since its inception in 2017, TfSE has quickly emerged as a powerful and effective partnership for our region. We have a [30-year transport strategy](#) in place which carries real weight and influence and will shape government decisions about where, when and how to invest in our region to 2050. The Secretary of State has confirmed that they will have regard to our strategy in developing new policy. We work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) to provide advice to the Secretary of State and our ambition is to become a statutory body with devolved powers over key strategic transport issues.

Our principal decision-making body, the [Partnership Board](#), brings together representatives from our 16 constituent local transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London. Together, our partnership represents more than 8.3 million people and 350,000 businesses in the South East and benefits from invaluable expertise and insight from those responsible for our region's strategic transport networks.

We believe TfSE offers a credible vehicle for devolution and levelling up in the South East. Our partnership has clear democratic accountability, strong stakeholder support and engagement and a track record of delivery in partnership with local and national partners.

Our [Strategic Investment Plan \(SIP\) for South East England](#) provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades. The plan provides a framework for delivering our Transport Strategy, which:

- is a blueprint for investment in the South East;
- shows how we will achieve our ambitions for the South East;
- is owned and delivered in partnership;
- as set out in the legislation to establish sub-national transport bodies, this document is intended to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Transport;
- is a regional plan with evidenced support, to which partners can link their own local strategies and plans – a golden thread that connects policy at all levels;
- provides a sequenced plan of multi-modal investment packages that are place based and outcome focused; and
- examines carbon emissions impacts as well as funding and financing options.

The plan presents a compelling case for action for investors, including government departments – notably the Treasury and Department for Transport (DfT) – as well as private sector investors. It is written for and on behalf of the South East's residents, communities, businesses and political representatives.

Investing in the South East will yield material economic, social, and environmental returns for our residents, businesses, and visitors, improved public health outcomes and supporting the UK economy and enabling Government to achieve its wider carbon, trade, and levelling-up objectives.

We believe Government should be flexible about its approach to devolution and who should co-ordinate levelling-up activity. For those locations, including the South East, that have either not been central to discussions around devolution or are not suited to current approaches around mayoral combined authorities, other ways to devolve should be considered.

Levelling up presents an opportunity to devolve the tools needed to bring about a step change in prosperity that not only benefits the South East but the wider UK economy. We know transport is a major facilitator of growth and the bold ambition of TfSE enables local communities to thrive and attract inward investment. In addition, it provides the key network for the movement of goods and service to the rest of the UK, supporting union connectivity through the South East extensive network of ports and airports.

Is existing transport infrastructure in the South East fit for purpose?

The region's existing transport networks require significant investment and improvement. If we do not act, then many of the investment priorities included in our SIP will not be addressed, and associated opportunities will not be realised. More specifically, there is a material risk that:

- the south east will not decarbonise its transport system fast enough;
- the south east's transport systems will not adapt to a post-pandemic, post-Brexit environment;
- housing growth will stall and house prices will remain unaffordable for too many of the south east's residents (and potential residents);
- the south east's left behind and more deprived communities will be unable to "catch up"; and
- improved public health outcomes will not be achieved, with disproportionate negative impact on the most vulnerable.

Our plan does not just focus on new build infrastructure. Packages include measures that make better use of existing assets and corridors, and support more efficient business and operating models. For example, there are proposals to enhance cross-regional rail and freight services using the existing rail network without having any detrimental impact on passenger services by utilising capacity released from a decline in five-day commuting. There are also proposals for a High Speed 1 / Marsh Link - Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne Upgrade.

How will the delivery of transport infrastructure enhance the government's ambitions for Global Britain?

Through our SIP and our [Freight, Logistics and International Gateways Strategy](#), we aim to enhance the capacity and contribution of the freight and logistics sector to the South East's economy

through improved connectivity to Global Gateways, including Freeports, and adapt to changing patterns of freight demand and trade, including making the most of innovations in sustainable first and last mile delivery.

Through improving access to global gateways the South East will increase domestic and international trade by reducing trading costs. The interventions in our SIP will facilitate trade in the south east and – at a much larger scale – between the UK and Mainland Europe. This will enable the UK to prosper as it adapts to a new trading relationship with the European Union and recovers from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Our own modelling suggests the transport interventions included in the SIP alone will generate 21,000 new jobs; an additional £4.1 billion growth in GVA a year by 2050; and additional 550,000 rail trips a day and 1.6 million bus, mass transit and ferry trips a day, and take over four million car trips a day off the roads of the South East. This growth will not come from transport alone, but transport will be an important part of the jigsaw and an enabler of growth in other sectors. Realising this opportunity will require an integrated approach to investment and delivery and will require working across institutional, sectoral, and spatial boundaries.

There are several drivers of growth that transport investment supports:

- **Connecting businesses** with faster and more reliable travel times. Our SIP enables the South East's towns and cities to boost their productivity by better integrating and sharing their economic assets, wider sharing of resources and knowledge, and will provide businesses with easier access to a large, diverse, highly educated work force.
- **Expanding the workforce** by easier matching of jobs to people. The SIP will enable firms to access and recruit a larger labour supply and provide wider employment opportunities for workers and those seeking to work.
- **Enabling development** through unlocking sites and locations that were previously poorly connected. The SIP will provide the sustainable transport capacity and connectivity for net zero growth and development.
- **Accessing global gateways** to increase domestic and international trade by reducing trading costs. The SIP facilitates trade in the South East and – at a much larger scale – between the UK and Mainland Europe. This will enable the UK to prosper as it adapts to a new trading relationship with the European Union and recovers from the global Covid pandemic.
- **Directing investment to level-up left behind communities.** The SIP makes the South East an even more attractive place to invest. It will bring areas up that are left behind relative to some other areas of the UK due to structural disadvantaged and resulting outcomes (e.g., low productivity and lower incomes and reduced health outcomes) or places that are held back by transport network constraints (e.g., where development opportunities are stalled due to traffic constraints or local access to key services aren't there by public transport).

Doing nothing is not an option. We believe a range of multimodal and wider policy interventions are needed to realise our vision.

Funding and Financing

TfSE has worked closely with the private sector to develop a funding and financing approach to our SIP which will ensure that we are not solely dependent upon government funding. We have considered a range of ways for TfSE to support funding and financing solutions – especially in terms of:

- developing business cases;
- assessing the broad spectrum of procurement routes (including those that lend themselves to private finance);
- helping identify and secure a broad range of funding sources for interventions (including thinking creatively about commercial revenues, user charges and new value-capture charging mechanisms); and
- supporting the efficient and accountable flow of funds to the interventions for which they are required.

TfSE intends to play an important role in working with the government and other stakeholders on developing potential future options for road user charging. This includes influencing the direction of any national reform, supporting local partners in developing solutions for specific geographies, and more broadly ensuring that revenues from any future interventions can be efficiently and equitably applied to support priority capital interventions in the South East. Full details of our funding and finance ambitions can be found from [page 80 onwards here](#).

We are ready to receive greater powers and responsibilities and we would encourage government to consider a devolved approach to infrastructure investment funding, enabling partnerships such as ours to deliver the kinds of transformational integrated investment programmes needed to support sustainable economic recovery and growth and meet our carbon commitments.

Other relevant comments

We also align with and support government priorities to rapidly decarbonise the transport system, improve public health outcomes, reduce congestion and improve road safety, level-up left-behind communities and facilitate sustainable economic growth in the South East. Highways opportunities in the SIP have a particular focus on those facilitating freight and bus movements to make the best use of the roads in our region. While emissions will improve with time as more vehicles are electric or hydrogen, the need to manage congestion and facilitate freight and bus movements will remain a particular focus within the SIP.

TfSE consents to this response being placed on your webpage and both officers and political leaders of TfSE are more than happy to speak at a meeting of the APPG if further insight is required.

This is an officer response. The TfSE Partnership Board meets on 13th March 2023 and will consider the draft response and a further iteration of this response may therefore follow.

Yours sincerely,



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