

Integrated National Transport Strategy Roadshows

These are currently taking place around the country and have been highly engaging and successful so far. The Peninsula Transport event will take place in Falmouth on 7th March, but stakeholders are welcome to sign up to any of the roadshows if it is not possible for them to get to Falmouth. The Roundtable segment of the events has been cancelled but the majority of the roadshow agenda will continue as planned and there will be plenty of time to engage with attendees.

South West Rail Debate

This took place at Westminster Hall on 14th January. Many MPs from the region raised issues and concerns about rail provision in the region (including Old Oak Common, service reliability, fares, Bristol to London services, connectivity and isolation in Cornwall in particular).

Minister Simon Lightwood then responded:

- The Rail Minister has now met GWR and CrossCountry, as well as Network Rail, to ensure they are delivering on their plans to address poor performance.
- Ministers attended a debate on the impact of Old Oak Common on rail services. The frequency of these debates demonstrates the importance that hon. Members and their constituents place on the rail network, and the crucial role it plays in supporting economic development, housing, employment growth and tourism. That is why we have made fixing Britain's railway our top transport priority. We need to improve services for passengers and deliver better value for money for the taxpayer.
- MPs have shown strong support for a number of potential rail projects across the region and the country. Ministers have been clear, however, that it will not be possible in the context of the financial situation the Government have inherited to afford to deliver all the proposed projects. The Secretary of State is conducting a thorough review of the previous Government's plans, to ensure that our transport infrastructure portfolio drives economic growth and delivers value for taxpayers.
- Many Members have referenced Old Oak Common and the impact it will have on rail services to and from the south-west. The station will enable HS2 services to start operating, by providing a new interchange with the Elizabeth line. Without it, HS2 cannot open. A project of the scale and significance of Old Oak Common cannot be delivered without some disruption to existing services. Our challenge to HS2 Ltd is to keep that disruption to a minimum and to support Network Rail and train operators to keep passengers moving.

Rail Reform

Plans for the landmark Rail Reform Bill to restructure Britain's railways were announced on 18 February and this will include the setting up of a passenger watchdog to give passengers a voice and hold train operators to account. A public

consultation was launched asking for views on new policies to be included in the forthcoming Bill, which will enable the establishment of Great British Railways (GBR). The consultation will close on 15 April.

Active Travel Fund tranche 2: stage 2 process evaluation

This evaluation explores local authority officers' experiences of how ATF funded schemes have worked across England.

The report explores local authority officers' views, perceptions and experiences of how ATF-funded schemes have worked in their area, including:

- scheme implementation
- scheme level monitoring and evaluation
- experiences of engagement
- how scheme characteristics affect success
- processes of funding active travel

This report is part of the second stage of the ATF process evaluation, which was conducted as part of a wider evaluation of the ATF. It provides a summary of the stage 2 findings from the process evaluation, with feedback from 28 funded authorities across England through 4 focus groups.

Active Travel Fund Allocations

These have now been released and published to include ATF5 for 2024/25 and the consolidated ATF for spending in 2025/26.

Buses

BSIP Terms and conditions letters have been issued. The approach will generally be more flexible with LAs able to convert up to £1m of revenue to capital without the need for project adjustment requests. There is also now an opportunity to convert capital to revenue, but any proposals for this will need to go through the project adjustment request process. We won't be approving individual Delivery Plans for 2025/26. This is part of the 'more devolution, flexibility and freedom' agenda that both DfT and HMG are trying to push. However, we will carry out a very basic assessment of all Delivery Plans to ensure that LTAs are: a) using the Bus Grant on bus schemes/initiatives/projects; b) not using the Bus Grant to 'top up' other bus pots (i.e. concessionary travel etc) and/or non-bus pots (i.e. social care etc) and; c) not using the Bus Grant in a way that is not allowed (i.e. to fund home to school services etc).