



Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport

Via Email

13 December 2021

Dear Secretary of State for Transport,

HATF response to Union Connectivity Review: Final Report

Heathrow Area Transport Forum (HATF) is a partnership between organisations in the private and public sectors with a shared goal of improving accessibility and increasing public transport use to and from the airport and the surrounding area. It operates in line with guidance set out by the DfT in the Aviation Policy Framework 2013.

At our recent board meeting of 30 November 2021 we discussed the Union Connectivity Review: Final Report. We noted that the terms of reference for this work were to undertake a detailed review of how the quality, availability and reliability of transport infrastructure can support economic growth and quality of life across the whole of the UK. Sir Peter was also asked to consider the environmental impact of policy options in this space (including with regard to climate change); and to specifically take into account any existing work completed by the government on cross-UK connectivity.

Given this scope, it is surprising that fixing the glaring gaps in sustainable transport access from the west and south to the UK's premier international gateway was omitted from the final list of priority projects – particularly given the large body of existing work produced by the government over the last few years on how best to rectify this.

Taking specifically the example of a new western rail link to the airport, this will act to bring Heathrow, and the 200 destinations in over 80 countries it serves, closer to South Wales, the Southwest, South central, Thames Valley and the South Midlands, so improving access for 14 million people and many businesses across the UK. It will also have positive environmental benefits from supporting modal shift and reducing congestion on the M25, M3 and M4 as well as enhancing reliability on the crowded Great Western Mainline and relieving Paddington Station.

All of these outcomes appear directly relevant to the Government's aims and objectives for commissioning a review on improving connectivity across the country. The HATF board was of the view that resolving these gaps in sustainable access to the airport should be considered key 'quick wins', for implementing early on in the life of the proposed new 'UKNET' strategic transport network. Ahead of your formal response to this work it would therefore be helpful if you can clarify the current thinking on how best to resolve the connectivity issues that exist from the west and south to Heathrow, given the clear evidence of the benefits of enhancing access to the country's only hub airport for the whole of the UK.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Val Shawcross". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Valerie Shawcross CBE, Independent Chair, Heathrow Area Transport Forum