

Integrated National Transport Strategy
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

20th February 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

HSPG response to Integrated National Transport Strategy: a call for ideas

Background

This response is made by the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG), a constituted grouping of 'willing' local authorities¹ committed to delivering sustainable growth across the functional economic area surrounding Heathrow Airport.

The Group was formed in late 2015. It is independent of, but constructively engages with, Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL). The Group collaborates on interventions that could improve the area around the airport and acts as a conduit between the members and Heathrow Airport Limited, regional and national Government, and other key stakeholders.

This response has been prepared by the partnership's secretariat, based on discussions in our Local Authority officer working groups.

Key Points

It is understood that this is a call for ideas that is understandably focussed on general issues, particularly around the use of data and technology. The response unashamedly focusses on Heathrow Airport and its surrounding area as the principles and ideas that can be applied here, in terms of integrating surface access to the airport, are approaches that could be applied in other locations, throughout the Country.

Heathrow's location on the edge of Greater London and its catchment in terms of passengers and employment creates demand for travel to the airport from across London, the surrounding areas and indeed the whole of the UK.

Solutions and interventions to best address this demand vary significantly in scope, both improving capacity of existing major road and rail infrastructure as well as providing brand new infrastructure. They encompass road and rail at a strategic and local level, including fiscal measures and sustainable transport solutions. As such the sustainable transport strategy for Heathrow can be an exemplar for what the National Integrated Transport Strategy, sets out to achieve.

The solutions that HSPG are prioritising are those that can be the most impactful, whilst aligning with wider policy objectives. In essence we wish to deliver a high quality, sustainable and integrated transport system to and around the airport that improves productivity to grow our economy and compete in the global marketplace.

Strategic Rail

Overall HSPG and its member organisations are strong supporters of the principle of strengthening strategic rail links to both the west and south of Heathrow airport. Both rail links are essential to support sustainable growth and will radically improve access to the airport from many areas, including those adjacent to the airport where there are major connectivity issues. Improving access to the airport

from such areas will help both distribute the economic benefits of the airport as widely as possible, as well as help ensure that the airport can meet its obligations on traffic and air quality.

To date western and southern rail links, whilst complementary, and indeed looking to share the same facilities at Terminal 5, have been taken forward independently. HSPG considers that there would be benefits, savings and economies of scale, if elements of these projects, particularly in relation to development, design, business case generation and the investigation of innovative funding opportunities were brought together and carried out for both projects. We would encourage Government to give serious consideration to integrating these projects further, during their current stages of development.

HSPG accepts that funding from the private sector and Heathrow will be key to delivery of these infrastructure enhancements, but equally wishes to see a firmer commitment from Government on the funding and delivery of these schemes.

HSPG remains keen to work with the Department on the future assessment and development of these rail links and would welcome your views on how we can best support the Department in rapidly progressing this vital infrastructure.

Integrated Hub

HSPG believes that Heathrow has potential to develop as an interchange hub for the sub region, with buses, local and strategic rail integrating to provide a key role in connecting journeys across the sub-region, over and above airport related transport, especially benefiting key flows around the M25 and M4 corridors.

Whilst access to the airport will remain the primary travel generator, there is significant potential to provide better rail connections, with western and southern rail access offering new travel opportunities linking directly to new interchanges at Old Oak Common and London Paddington from across from Hampshire and Surrey and the wider south east.

Closely linked to the above is the development of an integrated hub and increasing travel demand is the need to grow multi-modal ticketing which would support the growth of the airport as a transport hub for airport and non-airport travel.

Local Buses

Heathrow already provided a comprehensive network of bus services across the region, both within London and the neighbouring LTAs outside London. The local authorities outside London that surround Heathrow all have developed Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) and have also working with Heathrow Airport Ltd, Transport for London and London Borough to develop a Heathrow focussed BSIP, in line with Department for Transport guidance

There are unique challenges and opportunities serving airport passengers, colleagues and those interchanging at Heathrow, which would benefit from a joined-up approach to developing and delivering bus improvement interventions. There is an opportunity for more joined-up planning between operators, Heathrow and local government to ensure that all components of the bus system are developed to maximise the positive impacts of an improved, integrated bus network.

In particular the development of a ticketing offer at Heathrow to achieve more seamless, integrated ticketing between bus operators and between buses and other modes such as rail and London underground.

Funding

Funding of infrastructure is a significant issue and with Government funding constraints likely to remain tight for a number of years, there is a need to be flexible and innovative in finding ways to

generate the necessary finance to support the interventions needed. Airports offer unique opportunities to leverage private sector funding, at a percentage far higher than the National Infrastructure Commission has suggested for transport, potentially at around 20% private financing. Nevertheless, experience suggests that even this is insufficient to deliver the most transformative schemes, such as the strategic rail interventions set out above. HSPG suggests that Government should consider a specific fund to unlock this type of investment and look to create a network of airport based national integrated transport interchanges, that will support both airports and wider integration policies and aspirations.

As a representative body of local authorities with a huge stake in both the success of the airport, but also in mitigating the worst of its impacts on its neighbours, HSPG welcomes the opportunity to put forward our views into this important discussion.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Frost, Associate Director Heathrow Strategic Planning Group
On Behalf of HSPG members
