

# Transport & Energy Infrastructure planning news

SEPTEMBER 2017



## Headline news

### Infrastructure funding announced to support housing developments

The Housing Minister, Alok Sharma, has announced that South Oxfordshire District Council will receive £6.2m in Government funding to accelerate the delivery of Didcot's Northern Perimeter Road.

The local infrastructure is considered one of the key new roads that will support the development of Didcot Garden Town, a locally-led development which is expected to deliver over 15,000 new homes by 2031.

Three other 'critical infrastructure' projects have been awarded grant funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to boost the delivery of large-scale housing projects – these are:

- Parkhurst Urban Village, Isle of Wight (£9.6m);
- Poole Power Station, Dorset (£2.6m); and
- Waterside area, Nottingham (£1.25m).

Highways England has also announced a £19.9m contribution to support growth opportunities in Leicestershire and the South East; the funding, part of Highways England Growth and Housing Fund, will provide financial contributions towards the cost of road improvements that are considered essential to deliver new developments, homes and jobs.

Three schemes have been awarded the funding, these being:

- M27 junction 9 Whitley Way, to unlock up to 3,500 homes;
- Anstey Lane (A46/A560), to support the delivery of up to 2,378 homes; and

- M1 junction 23, to unlock up to 4,000 homes.

The three schemes will also benefit from additional £19m of funding from other sources, including Highways England Congestion Relief Fund, local growth fund, and private developer contributions.

## Transport

### Rail

### HS2 updates: major contracts signed, and 'unprecedented' conservation project starts

The first major contracts to deliver the tunnels, bridges and earthworks in relation to the first phase of the new High Speed 2 railway (London to Birmingham) have been formally signed; the winning companies will support the creation of 16,000 jobs across the whole UK.

In other related news, HS2 Limited is developing its first new wildlife habitats along the HS2 line of route; works have started at Finham Brook, Kenilworth, Warwickshire to create 6 new ponds together with new woodlands, which include over 6,200 trees and shrubs.

The new habitats are expected to support local wildlife species, such as birds and great crested newts, and form part of an 'unprecedented' conservation project which aims to create a green corridor of connected wildlife habitats developed alongside the new railway.

Finally, the House of Commons Library has published two briefing papers that cover the different phases of the new HS2 railway; specifically:

- High Speed 2 (HS2) Phase 2a; and
- High Speed 2 (HS2) Phase 2b and beyond. ■

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



This £6.2 million funding is excellent news for the Oxfordshire area, promising to boost local growth and turbo-charge the delivery of thousands of new homes.

**Housing Minister Alok Sharma,** announcing the allocation of funding to accelerate the delivery of Didcot's Northern Perimeter Road

## THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

The UK Government is pushing forward with its road investment plan aimed at supporting the much-needed delivery of thousands of new homes, as it is also doing with the recent funding allocations for new railway stations across the country. It is crucial for the future success of different parts of the UK that housing developments and infrastructure improvements are jointly planned and integrated as much as possible.

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LICHFIELDS

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## Funding announced for five new railway stations

The Government has announced the allocation of £16m in funding aimed at improving rail services by opening five new stations around the country. The successful bids under the New Stations Fund are as follows:

- Hornden Peterlee (County Durham) will receive £4.4m;
- Warrington West (Cheshire) will receive £4.2m;
- Reading Green Park will receive £2.3m;
- Bow Street (Ceredigion, Wales) will receive £3.8m; and
- Portway Parkway (Bristol) will receive £1.7m.

All the stations are expected to be completed by March 2020.

As regards other new stations, on 7 August the Transport Secretary Chris Grayling officially opened Cambridge North. Speaking at the opening, the Transport Secretary said:

‘The opening of Cambridge North marks the start of our plans to transform journeys for passengers in Cambridgeshire and maximise growth for the wider region [...] East West Rail is at the heart of that transformation and can be a critical part of our plans to make this region the UK’s own Silicon Valley, a world renowned centre for science and innovation.’

## Transport Secretary approves Barking Riverside Overground extension

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has made the London Overground (Barking Riverside Extension) Order (subject to modifications) and granted the application for deemed planning permission (subject to conditions), as applied for by Transport for London (TfL) and relating to a 4km extension of the London Overground network to Barking Riverside.

According to the decision (made in line with the Inspector’s recommendations) issued on the Transport Secretary’s behalf, the primary aim of the extension project is to provide new sustainable transport infrastructure to support economic development and population growth in the area.

The Inspector had noted that the area ‘is currently very isolated in transport terms and its development is therefore dependent upon provision of new public transport infrastructure’.

The decision also states that with the delivery of the extension scheme, the area will be capable of accommodating 10,800 homes aimed at a population of 27,000 and capable of providing 4,600 jobs.

## North of England political and business leaders demand devolution and fair transport deal for the North

The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burham, together with political leaders from other northern cities including Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield and Newcastle, attended the Northern Transport Summit in Leeds where it was agreed that a representative body of political and business stakeholders ‘should be set up to speak with one voice for the North’.

The intention is for this new body (dubbed by some as ‘Council of the North’) is ‘to bring the Northern perspective to crucial long-term issues currently being debated, such as Brexit and transport funding’ and to make the case for further devolution of powers from central Government to the North.

Specifically, the transport summit urged the Government to ‘honour the promises it has already made to the North’ in regard to rail infrastructure improvements, while also pledging to work for the construction of a broad-based campaign to win parliamentary support for its demands.

Andy Burham said:

‘It is time now for the North to pool its political influence and show a real willingness to use it, like London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been doing in recent times. Westminster has failed the North of England but in the past we have struggled to speak with one clear voice on its unfair decisions. With the change in the parliamentary arithmetic, we have a chance to win more support for our cause.’

## Air

### Economic impacts of night flights

The Department for Transport (DfT) has published research that estimates the economic impacts resulting from changes to the night flights regime at three London Airports (Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted); a review assessing the methodology used in the study was also published.

Earlier this year, DfT launched a consultation on night flight restrictions at the three airports; the final decision document was published on 13 July 2017.

## Energy

### National news

#### Government provides details on review of energy costs

The Government has announced the launch of an independent review looking at the cost of energy, aimed at finding ways to keep energy prices as low as possible.

The review, led by Professor Dieter Helm CBE, forms part of the Industrial Strategy, as announced by Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark. It builds on the commitment previously made in the Industrial Strategy green paper and will take into consideration the whole electricity supply chain to look for opportunities for costs’ reductions in each phase (generation, transmission, distribution and supply).

### Electricity

#### Richborough Connection Project granted development consent

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark has granted development consent for the Richborough Connection Project, a 20km-long electricity transmission connection that will be built between Richborough and Canterbury, Kent.

The development would be built with 45 standard electricity pylons and 15 lower pylons, and would ensure a connection for a proposed high-voltage electricity link between Belgium and the Kent coast. ►►

In his decision letter, the Business and Energy Secretary recognised that the scheme would have adverse visual and landscape impacts over an extensive area. However, in his conclusions, Greg Clark states that the need case for the development 'has been demonstrated' and he considers that 'the overall benefits outweigh those [negative] impacts'.

## Gas and shale gas

### Appeal: gas power plant allowed as renewable infrastructure

Planning permission for a 14MW gas-fuelled peaking power plant near Hilcote, east Derbyshire, has been granted on appeal, after the appellant successfully claimed that the power plant 'forms part of the renewable energy infrastructure'.

The appellant had indicated how:

'...flexible peaking power generation capacity specifically forms part of the renewable energy infrastructure being developed to meet the UK's obligations under the EU Renewable Energy Directive, because renewable sources are supplies that are dependent on the time of day and weather conditions.'

Flexible peaking power generation plants are a type of energy plant that only functions during high demand periods, to supplement power supply.

The Inspector agreed with the appellant that the plant could reasonably be considered a 'renewable energy infrastructure' development, in accordance with both the National Planning Policy Framework and the EU Renewable Energy Directive. Finally, the plant would have a limited operation lifespan, and could be reinstated after being decommissioned.

Having considered these matters, and in rejecting the objections made by the council over noise disruption, the Inspector allowed the appeal and granted planning permission for the development.

### Shale gas firm makes first payment to community benefit fund

Energy firm Cuadrilla has made a payment of £100,000 to an independent Community Benefit Fund aimed at supporting local projects developed by the community living near the Preston New Road shale gas exploration site in Lancashire.

Moreover, local residents will also be consulted on whether they would prefer that funds agreed for other three wells that Cuadrilla has permission to drill will be paid into the same independent Community Benefit Fund, or proportionately redistributed to individual local households via a separate scheme.

## Wind

### Greg Clark approves East Anglia offshore wind farm

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark has made the Development Consent Order for the East Anglia THREE offshore wind farm; the Order in effect allows ScottishPower Renewables to build up to 172 wind turbines (capable of an output capacity of up to 1,200MW), 46 miles off the coast of East Anglia.

In his decision letter conclusions, Greg Clark stressed the 'national need' for such a development and recognises that the potential adverse local impacts do not outweigh the benefits of the scheme, in agreement with the Inspector's recommendations.

### CLG Secretary allows wind farm scheme

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has allowed a recovered appeal for a 4 wind turbine farm and associated developments at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, in agreement with the Inspector's recommendations.

In his conclusions, the Secretary of State gave significant weight to the benefits of the proposals, in terms of renewable energy contribution and mitigation of climate change effects, also acknowledging that the proposed development would not cause significant adverse impact on the landscape;

accordingly, he allowed the appeal and granted planning permission for the scheme.

## London

### Plans to boost digital connectivity unveiled by London Mayor

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has unveiled a series of measures aimed at boosting digital connectivity in the capital and tackling areas of poor connectivity (so called 'not-spots').

On the latter, a new Not-Spot Team will visit London's most problematic connectivity spots (such as in Rotherhithe, and parts of Westminster and the City of London), with the intention being to support the local authorities and providers in identifying and delivering effective solutions to improve connectivity.

Other measures relate to the setting up of the Digital Connectivity Funding Forum, a City Hall summit that will bring together London local authorities with the aim of supporting them in their applications for the Government's Digital Infrastructure Fund, and the work that TfL is undertaking to bring mobile connectivity to London Underground tunnels.

The Mayor has also officially appointed Theo Blackwell as London's first Chief Digital Officer. His remit includes working closely with the Smart London Board to develop a new Smart London Plan, building collaborations across London's boroughs and businesses to expand the digital transformation of public services, as well as support the spreading of innovation through common technology standards and better data-sharing.

### Night Tube boosted economy by over £170m in first year

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has welcomed the findings of new research on impacts of the Night Tube which show that, in its first year, the Night Tube has exceeded expectations both in terms of passenger numbers and economic impact on the city's economy. ►►

Figures released in August show that nearly eight million journeys were undertaken on the Night Tube since its launch. It is estimated that there has been a £171m the boost in London's economy as a direct consequence of the night service implementation; the figures also show that more than 3,600 jobs have been supported by the night service in the first year alone.

## London Assembly Transport Committee report on bus network

The London Assembly Transport Committee has published 'London's bus network', which provides the Mayor and TfL with recommendations on how to improve bus services in the capital.

The report's recommendations include:

- Moving towards a bus network design around the feeder/ trunk model (feeders are short, local bus routes that connect hub interchange points where other faster, higher-capacity services - the trunks - run along major corridors). Articulated buses could be a valid option to support this model;
- Improving customer experience on-line, at bus stops and on-board;
- Prioritising new orbital bus routes and express buses; and
- Redistributing bus capacity to outer London.

## Scotland

### Queensferry Crossing opening

The Queensferry Crossing opened to drivers on 30 August, marking the completion of this significant infrastructure development project.

The official opening by HM The Queen took place on 4 September.

The project, which was concluded almost £250m under budget, is expected to boost Scotland's construction and tourism sectors, having been a catalyst for employment (with over 15,000 people involved) and created business opportunities since work began in 2011.

The new bridge is expected to open

up opportunities for businesses looking to acquire land and property in the surrounding areas, as well as enhancing tourism opportunities.

Scotland's Economy Secretary, Keith Brown, said:

'I am looking forward to seeing all of the hard work and investment pay off and to unlocking the benefits that this magnificent new piece of infrastructure will deliver to local communities and to Scotland as a whole.'

### £1.5 million investment for offshore wind

The Scottish Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse, has announced a £1.5m Scottish Government investment in the Offshore Wind Accelerator; the Offshore Wind Accelerator is the Carbon Trust's 'world-leading' research, development and demonstration programme, that aims to reduce the cost of offshore wind to be competitive with conventional energy generation, as well as provide insights regarding industry standards (and best practice), and health and safety requirements.

The funding is aimed at supporting a range of projects to research the potential benefits of offshore wind for Scotland, as well as projects designed to encourage international collaboration and knowledge-sharing on the topic.

Scottish Energy Minister Paul Wheelhouse said:

'The potential benefits of offshore wind energy in Scotland are enormous, which is why the Scottish Government is committed to its development. By continuing to invest in it, not only are we stimulating economic change for the better, but we're also helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland and helping to fight the impacts of climate change.'

### 80,000-panel Scottish solar farm approved

Plans for a new solar farm to be located on a 47-hectare site near Elgin and Lossiemouth have been approved by Moray Council, following a positive recommendation by the Council's planners.

According to the planning report, the scheme - which will see the installation of around 80,000 solar panels - would 'not adversely impact on built or natural heritage interest upon residential amenity, landscape'. Furthermore, the visual impacts would be 'highly localised' and overall would be considered to be 'acceptable'.

### Potential risk to aviation leads to wind farm refusal

East Ayrshire Council has refused planning permission for a nine wind turbine scheme located on a 468 hectare site at Drogan, south of Sinclairston and east of Rankinston.

The scheme, promoted by developer Brookfield Renewable UK Limited, was of concern to the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) which lodged an objection over potential issues relating to how the turbines could potentially interfere with air traffic control radars.

The Council's planning officers stated in their report that the developer did not address this point sufficiently. The report goes on to acknowledge that 'the council has been reasonable to the applicant and has, twice now, delayed taking the application to planning committee for determination'.

The officers concluded that although the majority of material considerations were supportive of the development, it would be contrary to Government policy and the area's development plan 'given the outstanding aviation objection from NATS due to the lack of mitigation solutions to address the aviation impacts of the proposed development'.

### First section of A9 dualling programme to fully open

Scotland's Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, has announced the opening of the first section of the A9 dualling programme as the 2-year construction works are almost complete between Kinraig and Dalraddy.

Keith Brown highlighted that the new 7.5km section of dual-carriageway is expected to deliver a series of benefits for both the public and the Scottish economy. ■