

National Infrastructure Commission for Wales Annual Report

Annex 2

2019

Annex 2: Call for Evidence

All of our work will be informed by evidence. Below we set out the key issues on which our work will focus over the next year, and for which we now seek further evidence.

Key Issues

Digital Communications

Issue 1: Our provisional view is that, while a significant number of premises in Wales still don't have access to superfast broadband, the primary focus for public funds should be on extending superfast broadband to as many households as possible using the lowest cost technology and that the public funds that would be required to extend fibre to every home in Wales by 2033 should be assessed against other possible uses. We seek evidence on whether the UK Government's focus on extending more expensive fibre to the home, gigabit technology to every household in the UK will best serve the interests of Welsh citizens, including those who still lack access to superfast broadband.

Issue 2: Our provisional view is that: 4G and 5G mobile broadband may be the lowest cost technology to provide superfast connections to some Welsh households; that mobile connectivity delivers significant additional economic and social benefits in rural communities; and that, therefore, a greater proportion of public funds should be allocated to mobile as opposed to fixed broadband infrastructure or other infrastructure objectives. We seek evidence on whether and what additional measures the Welsh Government or local authorities could take (independently of Ofcom, the operators themselves, or the UK Government) to significantly improve mobile broadband coverage, including 5G, in Wales. What should our objectives for mobile coverage be?

Energy

Issue 3: Our provisional understanding is that electricity grids in Wales were not planned in a pattern that eases energy transmission from our untapped renewable energy sources to consumers, creating constraints on both the development of new grid connections and new renewable generation. We seek to understand how the existing electricity grid is constraining the growth of renewable electricity generation and why these constraints arise. We seek further evidence on approaches to rapidly improve the relationship between Wales' energy grid and the future growth of renewable energy, including innovations in energy storage, electrical engineering, the planning system, and other government interventions.

Issue 4: We seek evidence on the potential for commercial scale cost effective marine energy generation in Wales and the measures that are required to realise it. What proportion of Wales' electricity needs could be met by marine sources by 2030? Should potential economic benefits, in terms of jobs and investment in Wales, be offset against potentially higher costs of marine energy for consumers?

Issue 5: We provisionally consider that decentralised, community-based infrastructure projects could have an important role to play in transforming the energy supply chain, as well as in meeting other infrastructure challenges such as community broadband. We seek evidence to better understand how community energy generation schemes might be scaled up in Wales, and the measures that might be required to achieve this. We also seek evidence on existing barriers to decentralisation, including (but not limited to) the availability of electricity grid infrastructure referred to earlier. We seek evidence on how community energy infrastructure might be financed and the role, if any, for public authorities including local authorities. We are also interested in evidence as to whether local ownership requirements might impact the development of renewable energy infrastructure in Wales, either positively or negatively. Should potential economic benefits, in terms of jobs and investment in Wales, be offset against the potentially higher costs of renewable energy generated by community schemes?

Transport

Issue 6: We seek evidence to better understand how strategic connectivity can be improved in the following settings:

a) We provisionally consider that improving connectivity along the strategic East West Wales corridors to/from England, in North East and South East Wales is a transport priority. We seek evidence to better understand how capacity can be increased and congestion reduced in these strategic corridors.

b) We provisionally consider that connecting local areas to major economic centres has potential to support economic development and regeneration for example in the Heads of Valleys. We seek evidence to better understand the areas of Wales where such developments are most needed and the means of connectivity that would be most effective.

c) We provisionally consider that Wales has potential to improve connectivity to the rest of the world by air and sea for both passengers and freight. We seek evidence to better understand how Wales could maximise its connectivity to the rest of the world and the costs and benefits of doing so.

Issue 7: We provisionally consider that the economic case for major road and rail developments between North and South Wales is not strong. Connectivity between North and South Wales could be improved by supplementary developments such as better digital connectivity along major transport routes, improved passing places and rest facilities, EV charging infrastructure and improved rolling stock. We seek evidence to inform thinking about how supplementary developments could improve existing north/south transport links.

Issue 8: Wales' road infrastructure must be ready for the move to zero emissions vehicles by 2040 at the latest. We seek evidence to better understand how the transition to zero emission road transport can be enabled. We are interested in evidence of: Wales' readiness compared to other parts of the UK, the infrastructure barriers to zero emissions road transport and how they can be overcome, particularly in rural areas where the market may not provide the solution.

Issue 9: Transport in rural Wales poses different challenges and requires different solutions to those in urban Wales. We seek evidence to better understand how transport in rural Wales can be improved.

Issue 10: As well as improving transport infrastructure, it is self-evident that if there were less need for people to travel then congestion and carbon emissions could be reduced. Options for reducing the need for travel should be explored. We seek evidence to better understand how public policy in other areas can reduce the need for people to travel.

How to respond

Please identify to which issue(s) your evidence refers. Responses should be emailed to:

NationalInfrastructureCommissionfor
Wales@gov.wales
ComisiwnSeilwaithCenedlaetholCymru@
llyw.cymru.

Evidence should be submitted before Friday 27 March 2020. Evidence submitted after that date may not be considered.

If further information or clarification is required, the commission secretariat will contact you. If you need to submit a hard copy, please send your response to the:

Office of the National Infrastructure
Commission for Wales

Planning Department
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

The commission secretariat would be happy to answer any questions you may have on this call for evidence by e-mail at the address above.

FOI and privacy statements

We may publish any responses received. If you believe there is a reason why your response or any part of it should be considered confidential, please provide details. Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or other relevant legislation.

If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory code of practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidentiality.

In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If the commission receives a request for disclosure of the information, it will take full account of your explanation, but cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

The commission will process your personal data in accordance with relevant data protection law.

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