

# THE NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

### CONSULTATION

#### Responses from Cornwall Council

##### Section 2. REMIT AND PLAN

##### Q1. The Government has given the National Infrastructure Commission

###### Objectives to:

- foster long-term and sustainable economic growth across all regions of the UK
- improve the UK's international competitiveness
- improve the quality of life for those living in the UK

###### What issues do you think are particularly important to consider as the Commission works to this objective?

- Historically, due to location and lack of connectivity, some areas have been overlooked with regard investment in growth and infrastructure.
- Changes in technology and connectivity means that this has changed significantly. The 'unique selling proposition' for regions such as those in the South West are now more viable. This needs to be reflected in new ways of thinking about planning for future growth and the type of infrastructure that is needed.
- National priorities need to be developed in such a way that it does not exacerbate regional disparities, or overlook the contribution that can be made in peripheral regions.
- Infrastructure planning should be carried out in conjunction with skills and business initiatives.
- In peripheral regions this will mean that they can respond effectively to new opportunities and challenges which cannot reasonably be predicted over a 30 year time span.
- Planning around the environmental asset. Development in Cornwall can be an exemplar for other areas, delivering growth in post-industrial areas which is co-ordinated with environmental management and addressing market failures.
- The consultation reference to 'Climate change and environment' is noted. 'Sustainable growth' must be that be supported by a stable foundation, therefore, infrastructure for coastal protection and flood mitigation is critically important.

##### Q2. Do you agree that, in undertaking the NIA, the Commission should be:

- Open, transparent and consultative
- Independent, objective and rigorous
- Forward looking, challenging established thinking
- Comprehensive, taking a whole system approach, understanding and studying interdependencies and feedbacks?

**Are there any principles that should inform the way that the Commission produces the NIA that are missing?**

Infrastructure planning to consider where regions can become self – sustaining and reduce dependence on a single hub area. Research and development as to how this can be achieved will lead to greater national competitive advantage.

We welcome the notion that the NIA will be undertaken in a way that will challenge established thinking, with regard to environmental (green and blue) infrastructure.

**Q3. Do you agree that the NIA should cover these sectors in the way in which they are each described?**

- These sectors are ‘Supply’ characteristics which need to be considered in relation to demand for growth and development.
- A 30 year vision and needs assessment requires some pre-determined views on where growth will occur or where it can be encouraged.
- Changes in technology and connectivity mean that peripheral areas are in a much stronger position to contribute to National growth and resilience – This should be borne in mind when planning for growth.
- Infrastructure alone will not be a driver of growth. Wider conditions for growth need to be considered.
- There will need to be corresponding developments in research/development, technology, education and skills training, as well as progressive planning policies and support for new business initiatives.
- It follows that a ‘pipeline’ planning approach is needed to ensure that infrastructure is developed in alignment with skills development, research, and business innovation so that regions can respond effectively to new opportunities and challenges that cannot be predicted over a 30 year horizon.
- New developments in technology, energy production and waste management need to be considered in relation to the potential of specific regions
- Cornwall is working on ‘Grid Low Carbon Energy Development’, a sector where Cornwall does have unique selling propositions, including marine renewables. It would be encouraging to see planning for infrastructure development which supports the business case and rationale for further research and development work in this sector.

**Q4. Are there particular aspects of infrastructure provision in these sectors which you think the NIA should focus on?**

- Climate change adaptation for existing settlements is essential, enabling communities to withstand more uncertain climatic conditions needs to underpin all ambitions for growth. (Refer to UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2016)
- Supporting infrastructure for regional circular economies also may require government investment, particularly in the modelling required to establish how systems can be optimally designed.

- Public transport initiatives have the potential to strengthen the viability of urban areas, Town and City Centres, ensuring that these become a focus for new investment and growth. This in turn, this makes infrastructure planning more effective
- This is particularly true regarding the rail network and developments in rail technology. This is anticipated to have a significant future impact in the south west.

**Q5. The NIA will seek to pull together infrastructure needs across sectors, recognising interdependencies. Are there are particular areas where you think such interdependencies are likely to be important?**

A 'needs' assessment should include assessment of areas where there are market failures, if infrastructure planning is aimed at fostering growth in all regions.

Sustainable economic growth has to be premised on the basis of a sustainable environment that then provides a high quality of life for people, that delivers equal opportunities and social inclusion.

**Q6. Do you agree that the NIA should focus on these cross-cutting issues?**

Agree with all of Cross cutting issues. Understanding the geographical potential for individual regions will be important. As indicated in para 37, it is anticipated that there will be further study and a task force to do more detailed work on this. It is hoped that there will be an opportunity to input into this work.

**Q7. Are there any other cross-cutting issues that you think are particularly important?**

In terms of economic growth, regionally and nationally, infrastructure support is not the whole case. This needs to be matched with skills and business initiatives.

There is a tendency for planning infrastructure investment to focus on capital expenditure. Planning for growth needs to consider revenue funding to deliver skills, R&D, jobs and business initiatives.

### **Section 3. METHODOLOGY**

**Q8. Do you agree with this methodological approach to determine the needs and priorities?**

On a national scale there will be a tendency to focus only on larger projects, and current areas of growth. If schemes are be assessed on the basis of benefit to all regions, and increasing disparities with more peripheral areas are to be avoided, it would be useful to see how 'national' benefits are assessed, criteria defined and measured

Although it is a difficult and speculative assessment, attention needs to be given to factors which impact on private sector demand, decisions for new investment and impacts on the locations of growth and the ability to adapt to changes in the market.

As indicated in the response to question 1, and above, infrastructure planning should be carried out in conjunction with skills and business initiatives. This will enhance the regional and national responsiveness to new opportunities and challenges which cannot reasonably be predicted over a 30 year time span.

**Q9. Do you have examples of successful models which are particularly good at looking at long-term, complex strategic prioritisation in uncertain environments?**

Cornwall is working on 'Grid Low Carbon Energy Development', a sector where Cornwall does have unique selling propositions, including marine renewables. It would be encouraging to see planning for infrastructure development which supports the business case and rationale for further research and development work in this sector.

Cornwall is also working on an innovative whole catchment flood reduction scheme in an industrial community, which could make some contribution to the NIA methodology for assessment. More details can be provided if required.

**Q10. Do you believe the Commission has identified the most important infrastructure drivers (set out below)? Are there further areas the Commission should seek to examine within each of these drivers?**

With regard to population and demography, there needs to be an awareness of the importance of internal connectivity (public transport and digital) within regions and its importance in skills development, and a functioning competitive environment which can contribute to the competitiveness of the region in the wider market.

The relationship between these drivers and infrastructure is an iterative one. Where there is infrastructure, growth can take place; and vice versa; where growth takes place there is a measured need for infrastructure.

New technology and connectivity means that peripheral areas previously excluded from this loop can be seen to have new potential. It is hoped that the 30 year vision will recognise the new potential across all regions in its final assessment.

**Q11. The NIA will aim to set out a portfolio of investments that best meets the demands of the UK in the future. Do you have a view on the most appropriate methodology to determine that portfolio?**

It is anticipated that the success of the 30 year vision will be dependent on a clear assessment of need and deliverability of infrastructure, the capacity for future growth and adaptability in response to changes in the national/global market.

It is essential that account for natural capital is made in this portfolio assessment, work by Defra, its Natural Capital Committee and the ONS on bringing natural capital into the national accounts by 2020, should be reflected in assessments for long term infrastructure planning.

**Q12. In your view, are there any relevant factors that have not been addressed by the Commission in its methodological approach?**

- As indicated in the response to previous questions, planning infrastructure within a wider agenda for economic growth needs to consider skills and business development which enhances the ability to respond to (increasingly more frequent) changes in the global market.
- Historically, due to location and lack of connectivity, some areas have been overlooked with regard to investment in growth and infrastructure. Changes in technology and connectivity means the 'unique selling proposition' for regions such as Cornwall to accommodate growth should be reflected in new ways of thinking about infrastructure planning.
- Peripheral regions can more effectively respond to new opportunities and challenges which cannot reasonably be predicted over a 30 year time span.
- Cornwall's natural resources mean it has a broad range of renewables and low carbon energy potential. This needs to be taken into account with plans for growth and infrastructure provision.
- Planning around the environmental asset, in terms of potential benefits and risks. Development in Cornwall can be an exemplar for other areas, delivering growth in post-industrial areas which is co-ordinated with progressive environmental management and addressing market failures. Delivering sustainability will only be possible by taking proper account of our natural capital..

#### **Section 4. ENGAGEMENT: GETTING YOUR VOICE HEARD**

**Q13. How best do you believe the Commission can engage with different parts of society to help build its evidence base and test its conclusions?**

Cornwall Council would like assurance that there will be sufficient opportunity to for a considered input into the vision document.

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