

National Infrastructure Commission Consultation – response of the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies

The London Forum is a voluntary umbrella group for over 100 Amenity and Civic Societies in London.

Our responses to consultations are overseen and co-ordinated by our Planning & Transport Committee.

*Q1. The Government has given the National Infrastructure Commission objectives to: I foster long-term and sustainable economic growth across all regions of the UK I improve the UK's international competitiveness I 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?*

Address capacity issues by provision of diversionary rail routes (eg Oakhampton line for Cornwall)

Identify and address capacity pinch points for passenger and freight

Increase capacity on existing lines, once diversionary routes are in place

Improve connectivity where needed, e.g. HS3

The over-riding principle should be to minimise the distances passengers need to travel, with complementary planning policies alongside and more equitable fuel costs for rail cf. air. For freight, the over-riding principle should be to achieve modal shift from road to rail, particularly where residential roads are subjected to high levels of freight

*Q2. Do you agree that, in undertaking the NIA, the Commission should be: I Open, transparent and consultative I Independent, objective and rigorous I Forward looking, challenging established thinking I 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?*

We agree with motherhood and apple pie: the principles noted above should apply

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

Not entirely – you cannot plan the infrastructure without reference to planning policies and the built environment. Affordable housing has to be within its remit.

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

See response to Q.1

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

We cannot afford predict and provide (it doesn't work) so we must plan to minimise the need for transport infrastructure, recognising that new infrastructure will still be needed.

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

They certainly need to be addressed.

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

The full implications of any proposal have to be assessed. The cost of mitigating measures must be included in the cost of the project before its value for money can be fairly assessed.

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

Yes, as long as stakeholders have the opportunity to express their views clearly, rather than responding to questions that make contentious assumptions

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

Sadly no; but we could highlight the outstandingly successful infrastructure projects (e.g. Manchester Tram, Thameslink, London Overground orbi-rail, contra-flow bus lanes) and draw comparisons with future proposals.

*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?*

Government housing policy could have a massive effect on future demography and we can only reiterate our concern that housing supply has been excluded from the remit

*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?*

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

We have no observations relating to this section

*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?*

It will command respect if it can demonstrate that it is listening to disinterested experts rather than promoters of schemes or politicians over-wedded to vanity projects