

# News story: Potential of light rail schemes hailed for future urban travel

- minister Jesse Norman launches call for evidence to seek views on the potential for new light rail and other rapid transit solutions in English towns and cities
- announcement made on visit to Midlands Metro Extension in Centenary Square, Birmingham, funded by £60 million government grant
- light rail and tram journeys already account for 3% of all public transport journeys in England

New light rail and other rapid transit solutions could be integral to our future transport networks across England's town and cities, Light Rail Minister Jesse Norman will announce today (7 February 2019).

The announcement came as the minister visited the extension of the Midland Metro light rail system in Birmingham – one of the 8 light rail systems in England responsible for 267 million journeys every year – to see how similar networks could rolled out across the country.

The call for evidence offers an opportunity to understand the role light rail systems and other systems, including very light rail, ultra-light rail and other automated guided transit systems, can play in the future of urban mobility, delivering environmentally-friendly, accessible and modern options for passengers.

It also aims to discover how future schemes can integrate seamlessly with new trends such as autonomous vehicles, in addition to buses, cycling and walking.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

The Midlands Metro network shows how government support can help to create a sustainable, accessible and innovative light rail system, which forms an integral part of a modern urban transport network.

This is a great time to explore the incredible potential for light rail schemes across the country. Today's wide-ranging call for evidence seeks new ideas and new support for the next generation of light rail, so that we make existing systems work better, and can work with cities and towns across the UK to create new ones.

The [Midlands Metro extension](#) – adding an additional 5 tram stops between New Street Station to Five Ways roundabout in Edgbaston – has benefitted from a £60 million government grant.

Using battery technology, with part of the scheme constructed without

overhead lines, the extension is helping to provide faster, more frequent and environmentally friendly journeys across the city.

The network previously benefitted from a £250 million allocation from the [Transforming Cities Fund](#), designed to promote growth and improve transport links for commuters, which delivered the extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill.

The same round of funding also gave £83 million to Transport for Greater Manchester to support the procurement of 27 additional Metrolink trams in Manchester. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling recently visited Manchester to discuss how an innovative tram-train could deliver more reliable journeys and cut congestion.

The government has also announced £1.5 million of funding to establish a Light Rail Safety Standard board to ensure safer journeys for passengers. This will ensure improved management across the UK tram industry by enabling more effective UK-wide cooperation.

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## [Press release: Mordaunt launches fund to help isolated and marginalised women return to work](#)

- £500,000 will help start up innovative programmes to help marginalised women return to work
- Around 1.8 million women are currently economically inactive because they are caring for their home or family – more than eight times the number of men in that position
- The new fund opens today for organisations and charities across England.

In the UK, around 1.8 million women are currently economically inactive because they are caring for their home or family, this is more than eight times the number of men in that position. Nine out of 10 potential returners to work are women.

The new £500,000 fund, which opens today for organisations around England, follows [Ms Mordaunt's commitment to put marginalised women at the heart of the Government Equalities Office's \(GEO\) work](#), and to [publish a strategy in late spring](#) setting out how government will work to economically empower all women.

Grants will only go to those organisations which can show they have direct relationships with employers who can offer jobs opportunities. They will support parents and carers – men and women – back into the workplace through training, refreshing skills and facilitating work placements.

The funding will support vulnerable people who struggle to return to work, such as:

- Victims of domestic abuse, including economic abuse
- People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- People who speak little to no English
- People with substance abuse support needs
- People with mental or physical health issues
- People who can't access public funds due to their immigration status, but who have the right to work
- Ex-offenders
- People struggling to cope with their economic circumstances
- Women who experience multiple barriers due to their gender and their faith, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt said:

“For too long caring responsibilities, language barriers or the terrible impacts of domestic abuse have held many women back from having the freedom, support and choice to do what they want to do.

“I want all these women to be given the chance to reach their full potential, which is why we are investing in them to grow their skills and their confidence, so they feel ready to return to work when they want to.

“By supporting women at all stages of their lives, we are tapping into previously ignored talent, addressing gender inequality in the workplace and helping our economy grow.”

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

“I welcome the steps set out today and encourage all employers to open their doors to the huge pool of talent out there.

“Last year was a record breaking year for women’s employment with more in work than ever before.

“But for some women, economic empowerment remains the final frontier. Women can never be truly free until they have economic independence and I know there are still women out there who need extra support to help them overcome their personal barriers and find their way into a job they want.”

Studies have shown that time out of work and fewer years of full-time work are two of the reasons women struggle. Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that time out of the labour market has a substantial impact of women’s salaries. On returning to work, women earn around 2% less on average for every year spent out of paid work.

Last year the government guaranteed £1.5 million to get people with caring responsibilities back into work. So far, £489,050 has already been awarded to five organisations, and the remaining £1.01m will be awarded soon.

To ensure the GEO is at the heart of the government’s work on equalities,

last year Ms Mordaunt announced it will [join Cabinet Office from 1 April](#). GEO will work across government and with business and civil society to tackle persistent inequalities that limit economic empowerment at every stage of life.

Notes to editors:

Information on the grant can be found [here](#)

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## [News story: UK PACT's first project in Colombia will improve energy access](#)

Approximately 3 million people in Colombia have no access to electricity and many live in remote locations unsuitable for connection to the national grid. To address this issue, the Colombian Fund for Non-Conventional Renewable Energies and Efficient Energy Management (FENOGE, under its Spanish acronym) was established with approximately £13m to finance energy access and energy efficiency projects across the country. However, the fund requires support and improved technical capacity to assess and select the necessary projects.

UK PACT (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions) –a £60m International Climate Finance programme at the UK Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy dedicated to providing capacity and capability building for countries eligible for Official Development Assistance– has partnered with the Carbon Trust in Colombia to unlock the FENOGE funds by providing the necessary tools and frameworks to the government's planning agency for energy and mining, UPME. The project will apply cost-effective solutions to promote the efficient management of the available resources.

This collaboration is the first UK PACT project in Colombia. The assistance from the UK Government will directly help FENOGE spend its 2019 funding allocation by the December deadline.

The British Ambassador to Colombia, Dr. Peter Tibber, explained:

This first project of UK PACT in Colombia will support the improving provision of energy access whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions, by ensuring that critical projects to bring sustainable energy to Colombia's remote regions can go ahead.

### **About BEIS' International Climate Finance**

BEIS' International Climate Finance is a UK Government commitment to support developing countries to respond to the challenges and opportunities of

climate change. As part of this commitment, BEIS is providing at least £5.8bn of ICF between 2016-2020, aiming for an even split between mitigation and adaptation. This places the UK amongst the world's leading providers of climate finance.

The focus is on:

- Building the resilience of the poorest people and communities
- Ensuring that the vast expansion in infrastructure in developing countries is low-carbon
- Halting deforestation

## **About BEIS' UK PACT**

BEIS's UK PACT programme forms part of the UK's £5.8bn commitment to international climate finance by 2021, as part of the global effort to tackle climate change.

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# **Press release: Charity Commission issues Official Warning to trustee of housing charity**

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today (5 February 2019) issued an [Official Warning](#) to a trustee of Expectations (UK) ([registered charity number 1152491](#)) due to a breach of trust and legal duties.

The charity, which operates in Birmingham to provide social housing accommodation and assistance, has been subject to a regulatory compliance case since August 2017 due to concerns about its governance and the viability of the charity.

The Official Warning, issued under section 75A of the Charities Act 2011 comes after the trustee, Mr Blanchette, failed to cooperate with the Commission and failed to comply with two formal Action Plans previously issued.

The Commission is concerned by serious governance issues within the charity and has advised of the need to strengthen the board to bring additional skills and expertise into the charity.

The Commission's previous advice required the trustee to provide a business plan as evidence of its short and long term financial viability to provide the service and manage debts. Despite several requests, that plan was not provided until the Commission took steps to impose the Official Warning.

The regulator is also concerned about decision-making around an emergency loan provided by a company whose director is an associate of a former trustee. The decision to accept the loan was not documented, and so it is unclear whether the conflict of interest and/or loyalty was identified and properly managed.

The charity is also in breach of its statutory duty to file an annual return and accounts for the financial years ending March 2016 and March 2017. It has also provided the Commission with information that was inconsistent with that provided to another regulator also engaged with the charity.

The Commission is encouraged to see that steps have been taken to address its governance concerns, and that 5 new trustees have recently been appointed to the charity's board.

**Tracy Howarth, Head of Regulatory Compliance at the Charity Commission said:**

The public, and those that rely on the vital support of charities, expect high standards of integrity and accountability from those that run charities. This trustee has failed to live up to those standards, exposing their charity to serious uncertainty and risk. This warning should serve as a reminder to all charity trustees that their work is of high importance, and that they will be held to account for compliance with their legal duties and regulatory advice.

In issuing the warning, the Commission has set out action that should be taken to address its regulatory concerns, including carrying out a governance review, filing the outstanding accounts; submitting a business plan to the Commission.

The Commission expects the newly appointed trustees to address its concerns as a matter of priority.

**Tracy Howarth added:**

We want to see all charities thrive, so I welcome the arrival of new trustees at Expectations UK. This should signal a watershed moment for the charity, and I expect the new board to take swift steps towards tightening its governance and management. Charity trustees should at all times consider the needs of their beneficiaries, and be driven by their charitable purpose and mission in everything they do.

The regulator will be engaging with the new trustees, as well as Mr Blanchette, as part of its ongoing case. Any further breaches of charity law or regulatory advice would be of serious concern to the Commission.

The Official Warning is published in full [here](#).

Ends.

### **Notes to editors:**

1. The power to issue charities or individuals with an Official Warning was granted by the Charities Act 2016. It is designed to ensure a charity or its trustees know that a breach, misconduct or mismanagement has taken place and that it needs to be rectified.
2. An official warning is not a statutory direction. The Commission cannot use an official warning to direct trustees to take specific action. However, it must specify any action it considers the trustees or the charity should take to rectify the breach, misconduct or mismanagement. Furthermore, failure to remedy any breach specified in a warning can be used as evidence of misconduct or mismanagement including when considering whether to exercise other specified powers.
3. Section 15(2) of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to issue formal regulatory advice, including Action Plans, to trustees.

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## **[News story: Government announces plans to tackle illegal traveller sites](#)**

Sajid Javid set out draft measures aimed at making it easier for officers to intervene and remove travellers from land they should not be on.

The Home Secretary will also consider making it a criminal offence to set up such camps. It is currently defined in law as trespassing, a civil matter.

In addition, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced it will provide local authorities with practical and financial support to handle unauthorised encampments.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The vast majority of travellers are law-abiding citizens – but illegal sites often give an unfair, negative image of their community and cause distress and misery to those who live nearby.

There is a widespread perception that the law does not apply to travellers and that is deeply troubling.

The result of our initial consultation was clear – people want to see greater protection for local communities and for the police to be given greater power to crack down on trespassers.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

During our consultation, we have heard accounts of needless and unacceptable noise, abusive and threatening behaviour and extensive litter and waste from illegal traveller sites.

Only a small minority of people are causing this distress, but it's right that police are given extra powers to step in.

We are committed to working with councils to help them deal with these challenging cases, while also ensuring travellers have good access to legal sites.

The plans follow an initial consultation by the government to look at how to strengthen the response from police and local authorities, following calls for robust measures to protect landowners and those living close by.

The consultation response was clear problems are caused for communities by travellers moving from place to place – so councils will be reminded of their existing obligation to provide enough “transit sites” to reduce the risk of communities seeing illegal sites set-up on their doorstep and to identify suitable sites, so problems are not simply shifted on to neighbouring areas.

MHCLG has committed to give councils up to £1.5 million of extra funding to help them enforce planning rules and tackle unauthorised sites, with funding also available under the £9 billion Affordable Homes Programme to help pay for legal pitches.

Alongside this, the department has given £250,000 to support projects working with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities to tackle discrimination, improve integration, healthcare and education.

As part of the measures announced today, ministers will consider making data available on where legal sites are so it is clear which authorities are not offering their fair share of traveller facilities. Under new guidance to be published, the Communities Secretary will step in and review cases where there are concerns raised there are too many authorised traveller sites in one location.

Additionally, the Home Office will launch a review into whether it should criminalise the act of trespassing when setting up an encampment. A change in the law may allow the police to respond quicker and take tougher action.

The Home Office will also consult on proposals to amend the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to:

- lower the number of vehicles needed to be involved in an illegal camp before police can act from 6 to 2
- give the police powers to direct travellers to sites in neighbouring local authorities. Currently they can only direct trespassers to sites in the same area
- allow officers to remove trespassers from camping on or beside a road
- increase the time – from 3 months to a year – during which travellers are not allowed to return to a site they have already been removed from