

Press release: Update on process – Fox-Sky merger

On 23 January I provided an update to the House on the CMA's interim report on their investigation into the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox Inc and Sky Plc.

Today I received the final report from the CMA regarding the findings of their phase 2 investigation. Now that I have received this report, I must come to my decision and publish the report within 30 working days (by 13 June). My decision will be on whether the merger operates or may be expected to operate against the public interest, taking into account the specified public interest considerations of media plurality and genuine commitment to broadcasting standards.

When I have reached a decision I will return to Parliament to make an oral statement. I will come to a view on whether to make a final order or accept any final undertakings in due course, and will consult on these publicly, but not before I have taken a decision on the public interest tests.

Given my ongoing quasi-judicial role, I will not be making any comment about the substance of the report until I publish my decision.

Speech: Improving Infrastructure Delivery

Introduction

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

I'm excited to be here at the Institution of Civil Engineers, especially on your 200th anniversary.

Having grown up in Shropshire, Thomas Telford – the Colossus of Roads – is a hero of mine.

I want to say a few words this morning by way of introduction to this event and in thanking you in the work you have done on [Project 13](#) – an industry-led response to infrastructure delivery models that can sometimes fail.

I also want to speak about why infrastructure is essential for the country as we begin to tackle our age old productivity challenge and prepare the wider economy for the future.

The foundations we are working on are sound:

GDP has grown for five consecutive years

We've had the two strongest quarters of productivity growth since the financial crisis.

And employment levels are at a record high, with 3 million jobs created since 2010.

The plan to get back to living within our means is working.

And now we are ready to begin thinking about long-term investment in the years ahead.

So that we remain on our strong, upward trajectory, well into the future.

Investing in infrastructure

Infrastructure is at the absolute heart of that.

Because when we invest in infrastructure, we're not just investing in bricks and mortar. But in growth and productivity.

The UK's productivity performance currently lags behind other advanced economies.

But if we matched what German workers are doing, our economy would be 35% larger, which shows the incredible scale of the opportunity.

And we can begin to grasp it by focusing on infrastructure.

Because roads, rails, and cables boost productivity by developing networks and enabling businesses and individuals to connect more quickly, cheaply and efficiently.

The world of work will transform over the next 20 years.

More people want to lead flexible lives, more part time work, more people want to work from home, more connectivity than we've ever known before.

The infrastructure we are developing needs to be adaptable to fast growing technological change. From autonomous vehicles, to electric cars, to new forms of broadband.

We have to be nimble as well as far sighted.

What are we doing as a government?

We are building HS2 – the first new North-South railway in this country for over a century.

We are undertaking the largest road-building programme since the 1970s.

We are incentivising the market to build the next generation of broadband and mobile infrastructure.

At the Budget last November:

We increased the National Productivity Investment Fund to £31 billion, which included a £1.7 billion Transforming Cities Fund to boost local transport connections and reduce congestion.

And £11.5 billion for housing, to build more homes in high demand locations so that people can live near the best jobs.

This is not just a wish list.

Our track record shows we are serious and that we have the capability to realise our vision.

These are concrete plans.

Everywhere you look exciting things are happening in this country.

Britain is being re-shaped, reinforced, and re-made every single day.

Role of NIC and IPA

We have also put in place the architecture to help us realise our vision.

The National Infrastructure Commission and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority will play a vital role in this respect.

Two years ago, we set up the NIC, to think independently about Britain's long-term infrastructure needs.

To look at the big and difficult questions and to hold our feet to the fire to deliver.

I welcome this challenge and I hope Sir John Armitt will take that forward.

They have already delivered 5 substantive reports.

And we are taking forward their recommendations.

We are looking at issues which could be transformative to the future of the country, like the Oxford – Cambridge corridor of housing, economic growth and connectivity.

I am particularly looking forward to the inaugural National Infrastructure Assessment this summer, looking out 30 years into the future.

The work of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority is equally important.

It has helped us build a strong track record of investment and delivery in this country.

Since 2010, more than a quarter of a trillion pounds has been invested from public and private funds.

And more than 4,500 infrastructure projects have been completed.

Last year, the IPA published the [National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline](#), which set out an estimated £600bn investment over the next 10 years.

With over 50% of that investment coming from the private sector.

And we will continue to refine our plans to give certainty and confidence to industry and investors, and want your views on how to do that.

It is clear our approach really is working.

However, let us not forget that long-term challenges in the sector remain, which we need to tackle to set up Britain for success after Brexit, and beyond.

Project 13 is of course part of your response to those.

Better performance

We want the UK's infrastructure projects to deliver benefits for the end users – the public and the supply chain.

But we know that the sector faces structural issues that limit performance.

And we want to address these.

The current delivery model doesn't always match our ambition.

We are well aware that fragmentation, low-profit margins, and short termism drag the industry down.

Meaning that the sector can't invest in building new skills and the innovation that will boost productivity and improve delivery.

It is vital we get the most out of the money we invest.

So we can deliver improved performance and better outcomes from the £60 billion we spend each year on infrastructure; not simply a narrow focus on cheaper construction.

Because right now, there is an annual £15 billion productivity gap in construction in the UK – which needs to be plugged.

In response, we set up the [Transforming Infrastructure Performance \(TIP\) programme](#).

An ambitious cross-government initiative that will improve the planning, delivery and operation of infrastructure over the next ten years.

TIP is about improving outcomes and boosting productivity of infrastructure, to deliver value for taxpayers in the long term.

It is doing this by exploring how the government and industry can work together to benchmark performance, select the right projects, improve integrated planning and increase uptake of technologies and innovations – such as off-site manufacturing – and support smarter commercial relationships.

In government, we can encourage innovation in two main ways.

First, through increasing supply, which is why, in March, we launched the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund for Transforming Construction competition, including up to £72 million to fund a core innovation hub for “Manufacturing better buildings” – a key theme in TIP.

And secondly, through increasing demand. Which is why we now have a presumption in favour of modern methods of construction built into our procurement process.

And our order book of around £20bn a year in projects from schools to prisons to highways gives industry peace of mind that investments in modern methods now will pay dividends in the future.

Challenges

This year we witnessed a salutary lesson of what happens when we don't get things right.

Carillion collapsed for a number of reasons, and the government is working hard to support those affected.

It's important we learn from Carillion.

Because it is incumbent on Government to help create the right framework for the sector to flourish.

If we are to deliver our goals, it will be absolutely vital that we use the expertise and energy of the private sector.

As I said before, 50% of our £600bn pipeline over the next ten years will come from the private sector.

The private sector drives innovation and better value for money for consumers.

There are those who would turn away from it.

I believe that would be a terrible mistake – for taxpayers, consumers, for the competitiveness of the country.

Government and industry working together

To achieve the goals laid out in our TIP plan, it's vital that government and industry work together.

That's why it's so heartening to be here today. To see bonds being forged.

Project 13 is a great example of what needs to be done.

Because it sees a wide range of senior decision makers from the public, private and regulated sectors – clients and suppliers alike – coming together to set out a blueprint that aims to achieve better outcomes from infrastructure investment.

Project 13 encourages a focus on improving performance with a collaborative commercial approach.

It sets out a new model where interests and incentives are aligned.

And it supports a move away from unsustainable, short-termist procurement which strangles investment in skills and innovation.

Ultimately, it seeks to build a more sustainable commercial model that helps industry perform to its maximum capability.

Which is an ambition we can all support.

Conclusion

So ultimately we have to work together.

We have to ensure that infrastructure is delivered at pace, with value, with innovation, with a highly skilled workforce.

And if we can do that we can ensure our productivity increases as an industry, and as a country.

So I wish you all success with this Project.

Thank you very much.

[Press release: Statement on the merger between Trinity Mirror plc and Northern & Shell Media Group Limited's](#)

publishing assets

On 23 April I confirmed that I had written to Trinity Mirror plc and Northern & Shell Media Group Limited to inform them that I was minded to issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN) on the basis that I had concerns that there may be two public interest considerations – as set out in the Enterprise Act 2002 – relevant to consideration of the merger.

The first public interest ground is the need for free expression of opinion, and concerns the potential impact the transfer of newspapers would have on editorial decision making. The second public interest ground is the need for a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers, to the extent that it is reasonable or practicable.

I invited written representations from the parties by 26 April and, having considered these, I have written to the parties today confirming my decision to issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN) on both grounds.

This PIIN triggers action for Ofcom to report to me on the media public interest considerations and the CMA on jurisdiction and any competition issues, respectively, by the 31st May 2018. I will then consider whether or not to refer the merger for a more detailed investigation, or whether to accept undertakings-in-lieu of such a reference.

The role of the Secretary of State, in this process, is quasi-judicial and procedures are in place to ensure that I act independently and follow a process which is scrupulously fair and impartial.

Press release: May holiday patrols added to Cornwall traffic officer trial

As part of a trial initiative announced last month, the traffic officers patrolled for the first time in Cornwall over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, with further trial patrols due to continue during the busy summer months.

But due to the initial success over the Easter period, Highways England has now extended the trial to cover the two Bank Holiday weekends in May.

Rob Penney, South West Service Delivery Manager for Highways England, said:

The aim of the initiative is to provide further assistance to motorists on our South West network, and we're delighted to extend our service further south into Cornwall and to continue our close working partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police and Cornwall Council.

The Easter patrols provided real value and were well received, both by our partners and the public, and we dealt with and assisted 16 incidents over the five days.

On that basis, we have added the May patrols to the trial and although we were originally only focusing the initiative on the busier summer holiday months, we are confident that these extra patrols will help our customers and partner agencies during a busy travel weekend.

Highways England already works in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police, forming part of a multi-agency partnership in terms of safety and severe weather handling, and the trial is aimed at providing further support to Devon and Cornwall Police to help meet the demands of increased traffic volumes and related incidents on the A30 in Cornwall.

Traffic officers currently assist drivers in any difficulty, co-ordinate the resources of the emergency services, manage traffic to reduce incident-related congestion and clear debris from the carriageways.

The traffic officers will patrol the A30 between Carland Cross and Lifton Down and, based at Bodmin police station and Cornwall Council's Castle Canyke depot during the peak holiday months, they will be closer at hand to provide assistance along the A30 and A38.

Chief Inspector Adrian Leisk, head of roads policing for the Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police alliance, said:

Devon and Cornwall Police is delighted to expand its partnership working with Highways England into Cornwall.

This builds on the considerable success of the operational activity on the M5, A38 and A30 in Devon, where Highways England Traffic Officers have supported police resources in dealing with road traffic collisions and other incidents which have the potential to cause disruption on our strategic road network.

This 'one team' approach will undoubtedly help support communities and businesses who rely on a resilient and capable road network in Cornwall, during what will be the busiest periods of the year.

Highways England's Traffic Officer service patrols England's motorways and major A roads, helping to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

Traffic Officers are not an enforcement agency, but they do have the power to stop and direct traffic, close lanes and carriageways and manage traffic, and road users must obey their directions.

Traffic Officers help to keep roads running smoothly by attending incidents, ensuring the scene is safe, clearing the carriageway of debris, managing debris and supporting the emergency services.

They also deal with broken down and abandoned vehicles on the strategic road network, recovering vehicles that are causing a blockage or hazard, and ensure that the scene of an incident is safe, for road users and working partners.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a traffic officer you can visit the [traffic officers web page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Professor Brian Morgan appointed to regulatory board](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns has today welcomed the appointment of Professor Brian Morgan to the independent Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC).

Professor Morgan is currently a Professor of entrepreneurship at Cardiff Metropolitan University and director of its Creative Leadership and Enterprise Centre.

The Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) is an independent body sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy which assesses the impact on business of new regulatory and deregulatory proposals.

Professor Morgan joins four other new appointments to the board – and one reappointment. Each member has substantial experience and expertise to play a key role in overseeing the government's better regulation agenda.

Marking Professor Morgan's appointment, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The RPC is a body which plays such an important role in providing a robust and impartial check on the purpose and effects of proposed government regulatory activity.

Brian brings with him decades of leadership and experience in economics and enterprise and I am delighted to see him appointed to this important position.

I have no doubt that he will work effectively with his co-members in their efforts to achieve better regulatory outcomes that promote growth and jobs, and protect the interests of society. Appointments to the RPC are made by the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy in line with the OCPA Code of Practice.

Business Minister Lord Henley said:

The Regulatory Policy Committee has been applauded by business for the strong, independent scrutiny it provides around the impact of regulation on business.

The new members will bring valuable expertise and experience to the Committee and play a vital role in supporting the Government to ensure that the evidence underpinning policy making is robust.

Chair of the Regulatory Policy Committee Anthony Browne said:

It is great to have such a strong range of new members joining the RPC, as we prepare for leaving the EU. Never has the work of the RPC in helping ensure high standards of policy making been more important.

The other new members are:

Laura Cox

Laura Cox is currently a partner at PriceWaterhouseCoopers and is a member of the Law Society (England and Wales) and the American Bar Association.

Stephen Gibson

Stephen Gibson has over 25 years' experience as a professional economist, a regulator in regulated industries, and as a consultant. He has also lectured on the subject at Birkbeck and City Universities.

Andrew Williams-Fry

Andrew Williams-Fry is a regulatory economist and government affairs professional. He has worked in economically regulated sectors, including energy, water, rail, post, aviation and financial services and most recently has led regulatory and government affairs teams within the Mastercard group.

Sheila Drew-Smith OBE

Sheila Drew-Smith was a member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. She is the Chair of the National Approved Letting Scheme, a committee member for SafeAgents and is the safeguarding adviser to the Secretary of State for International Development.

In addition to the five new members, Jeremy Mayhew has been reappointed to the Committee. He has served since 2012 and is, also, a Member of the Legal Services Board and the British Transport Police Authority. Previously, his experience was mainly in the media and broadcasting industry, both at the BBC and as a consultant.

The new appointments have been made following an open recruitment process and in accordance with the Ministerial Governance Code on Public Appointments.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Professor Brian Morgan biography

Brian Morgan is a professor of entrepreneurship and director of the creative leadership and enterprise centre at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

In March 2016 the Enterprise Centre launched a two year Research project into aimed at mapping the future trends of the Welsh economy.

Brian traces his interest in economics and enterprise to his time as a student and lecturer at the LSE.

Before returning to academia at Cardiff University in 1997 Brian was Chief Economist at the WDA.

Has worked as a senior policy adviser in Wales (for the WDA and the Assembly), and in Whitehall (the DTI) and he has worked extensively in Europe (for the OECD and EU).

He is the co-founder of world renowned whisky brand, Penderyn and was chairman of Brecon Carreg.

In 2011 he was Chair of an independent review panel set up by the Welsh Government to assess the impact of business rates on economic growth.