

DFT NEWS FOR SW STB TRANSPORT BOARDS

New Ministerial Team

The DfT's latest Ministerial team is as follows:

Secretary of State: Mark Harper. MP for the Forest of Dean.

Minister of State: Jessie Norman. MP for Hereford & South Herefordshire. Former Transport Minister. Holds the decarbonisation, air quality and active travel portfolio.

Minister of State: Huw Merriman. MP for Bexhill & Battle. Holds the rail portfolio.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State: Richard Holden. MP for Northwest Durham. Was PPS under Chris Grayling whilst SoS at DfT. Holds the roads and local transport (including buses) portfolio.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State: Baroness Vere of Norbiton. The DfT's only continuing Minister (since 2019). Now holds the aviation and maritime portfolio.

Autumn Statement

In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor set out the fiscal outlook and some key plans around public spending:

- The UK faces the dual challenge of a recession and high inflation. Inflation is expected to peak at 11.1% in Q4 2022, and the OBR expects the UK to have entered a recession in Q3 2022;
- The Government's priorities **are stability, growth and public services;**
- For the remaining 2 years of this Spending Review period (23-24 and 24-25), budgets will be maintained in cash terms, with targeted uplifts in key areas (health and schools);
- The DfT's budget to 2024/25 remains unchanged from the Spending Review in 2021.

The Autumn Statement also included some key transport elements as part of signalling commitment to major infrastructure projects:

- HS2 to Manchester;
- East West Rail; and
- Northern Powerhouse Rail (as set out in the Integrated Rail Plan).

The Secretary of State has tasked the Department to review transport spending and develop a plan that delivers Government priorities for transport within the Department's agreed spending envelopes taking account of inflationary pressures. The Secretary of State is leading this process with his Ministerial team and DfT officials. Together, the Department will be taking a considered, comprehensive, and strategic approach over the coming weeks, and will seek to conclude this work as soon as is possible, keeping stakeholders informed.

The Autumn Statement also clarified the status of the acceleration project list developed for the Growth Plan. The list is no longer the focus for acceleration of delivery. Many of the projects have already embedded acceleration and cross-cutting issues were identified where work will continue to remove barriers and blockages across the portfolio.

Bus

The £60m bus fares pilot will introduce a £2 cap in participating areas from January 2023. A campaign for the pilot is anticipated later in December.

WECA and BCP have recently received are the latest authorities in the south west to receive confirmation of their BSIP monies.

Active Travel

The final funding for the Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4), the multi-year LA funding round for 22/23-24/25, is now subject to the post-autumn statement efficiency and savings review. Bidding for ATF4 will be launched once this completes and the budget is known.

Confirmation of Capability Access Fund (CAF) allocations are expected shortly.

Settlement for the next 5-year funding period for railway infrastructure in England and Wales

On 1 December the SoS published the objectives and funds available for operational railway infrastructure in England and Wales for the next control period - control period 7. This covers the period April 2024 to March 2029. This will be facilitated by significant government investment as set out in the statement of funds available, with Network Rail spending around £44 billion over the period. The government now expects Network Rail to develop detailed plans to deliver on these objectives, working closely with its customers. These will then be subject to strong and effective scrutiny by the Office of Rail and Road, as independent regulator, to develop robust, credible, value for money plans for the next control period.

Local Transport Plan Guidance

The formal consultation on the proposed revised Local Transport Guidance is now expected in the new year.

Levelling Up Fund

The outcome of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund (with at least £1.7 billion to be allocated to priority local infrastructure projects around the UK) is expected before the end of 2022.

David Glinos

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