



Department
for Transport

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From the Minister of State
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Dear Bim,

Thank you for your letter of 20 July to Grant Shapps about the Department's plans to improve resilience and ensure that your constituents can get around by air, rail and road in the event of future extreme high temperatures. I am responding as the Minister responsible for this issue.

The Department for Transport has plans in place and work is already underway to adapt to and mitigate the risks of climate change. The Road Investment Strategy includes a commitment to enhance all-weather resilience of the Strategic Road Network, to minimise the risk of incidents and their impact for road users. Similarly, the Williams-Shapps Rail Plan includes a priority for long-term investment in climate resilience supported by smarter forecasting, planning and technology.

The UK was one of the first nations in the world to enshrine climate adaptation into law in the Climate Change Act 2008. The Act created a framework for strengthening UK preparedness to climate change risks. These include preparing, on a five yearly cycle, a UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), followed by a National Adaptation Programme (NAP), setting out actions to address the risks identified in the CCRA.

The third National Adaptation Programme is due in 2023. It will showcase the Government's strategy and plans to tackle the effects of climate change, including how to protect people, infrastructure and the environment in heatwaves. For transport, this means working closely with transport infrastructure operators to take meaningful and measurable action to address risks posed by our changing climate.

Acknowledging the risk that climate change poses to our transport network, DfT is going further and will develop an internal transport adaptation strategy.

The strategy will take a long term, network-wide approach, removing the modal silos so we can identify and address gaps, opportunities and interdependencies whilst raising awareness of adaptation across the sector and share best practice.

Air, rail and roads manage and respond to the risk posed by extreme heat in a number of ways, as set out below.

Airports

Safety is an utmost priority in aviation and therefore in accordance with safety management protocols, during periods of severe weather, airports increase monitoring of operations, which includes increasing the frequency of runway inspections when surface damage is more likely.

There are a number of factors that can impact wear of runways, including usage, aircraft weights, existing repairs and age of runway surface. Regular rehabilitation and resurfacing works are scheduled by all major airports to keep their runways in the best condition to support aircraft movements safely.

Although regrettable to close a runway when issues are presented, safety must come first.

Rail

Ensuring the rail network is as resilient as reasonably possible to the effects of extreme weather - including significant rainfall as well as extreme heat - is a vital part of the work that Network Rail carries out, both now and in the future.

Network Rail budgeted approximately £2 billion in Control Period 6 (2019-2024) for drainage and earthwork asset renewals and targeted investment in other assets such as track, structures, overhead lines; standalone climate change resilience projects; and implementation of the climate change adaptation elements of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy perspective across Network Rail central and regional functions.

On Wednesday 20 July, Network Rail announced the launch of a new taskforce led by independent experts to investigate and make recommendations on how the railway can develop its approach to resilience during hot weather following this week's unprecedented heatwave.

Road


National Highways, which is responsible for operating and maintaining the Strategic Road Network (SRN), has set out its most recent plans for climate mitigation in its third adaptation report under the Climate Change Act, published in February this year. This sets out the potential future risks to the SRN from a range of hazards, including high temperatures, as well as a list of specific actions.

Through the development of the third Road Investment Strategy (2025-30), actions required during this period to maintain resilience in response to climate change will be considered.

The national policy statement (NPS) for national networks, which is the government's strategic plan for major road and rail schemes, is currently being reviewed. The review will be conducted in line with the Planning Act and requires the Secretary of State to have regard to the desirability of mitigating, and adapting to, climate change in designating an NPS. The current NPS, which remains relevant government policy and has effect for the purposes of the Planning Act, recognises that new national networks infrastructure will be typically long-term investments which will need to remain operational over many decades, in the face of a changing climate. Consequently, applicants must consider the impacts of climate change when planning location, design, build and operation. Work has begun on the NPS review and the aim is for this to be completed no later than spring 2023.

Many transport operators including Luton Airport, Network Rail and National Highways report on their preparedness for climate change under the Adaptation Reporting Power. You can view these reports here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/climate-change-adaptation-reporting-third-round-reports

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M/H', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right and ending in a period.

TRUDY HARRISON MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT