



House of Commons
Transport Committee

**Surface transport to
airports: Government
Response to the
Committee's First
Report of Session
2015–16**

6th Special Report of Session 2015–16

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Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Transport and its associated public bodies.

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The current staff of the Committee are Gordon Clarke (Committee Clerk), Gail Bartlett (Second Clerk), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Adrian Hitchins (Committee Specialist), Andrew Haylen (Committee Specialist), Daniel Moeller (Senior Committee Assistant), Michelle Owens (Committee Assistant) and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

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Sixth Special Report

On 26 April 2016 we received a response from the Government to the Transport Committee's First Report of 2015–16, *Surface transport to airports*, which we publish with this Special Report.¹

Government Response

Introduction

The Government welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Transport Committee's recommendations on surface access to airports. The Government aims to promote greater use of public transport to airports as part of its overarching approach to a competitive aviation sector, putting passengers and airport workers needs at the top of our agenda.

Passenger preference and modal shift

Recommendation 1 – We recommend that the Department require airport operators to update any plans and surface access strategies that have not been updated in the last five years by the end of this year (Paragraph 31)

Recommendation 2 – There is too little scrutiny of individual strategies and plans which is akin to letting airports set and mark their homework themselves. We recommend that the Government consult on the institutional and governance arrangements needed to ensure airport operators are setting meaningful targets and being held to account for their performance. Any arrangement for greater scrutiny should provide the Department with an assurance that such targets and actions are aligned with the Department's own policy objectives on modal shift. (Paragraph 31)

The Government agrees that it is good practice for airports to have in place an up to date airport master plan and surface access strategy. It is in an airport operator's best interests to clearly lay out its surface access plans in accordance with the recommendations in the Aviation Policy Framework, in order that these may be given appropriate consideration in local and national investment and planning processes. The Government also agrees that it is important for airport operators to have in place targets for increasing the proportion of journeys made to airports by public transport and a clear strategy for meeting these targets.

At present of the 14 airports captured by this inquiry, regarding Airport Surface Access Strategy (ASAS) only one has not been updated within the last five years. Of the others, ten have been produced in the last five years, two are currently being updated by the airport operators and one is currently out for consultation. With regards to Airport Master Plans (AMP); five are less than five years old, seven are older than five years (one of which is expected to be consulted on in the Summer), another is currently being consulted on at present, and the update for a further one which was consulted on last year is due to be published shortly. Where an airport has plans for expansion, our expectation is that

¹ [HC 516](#), published on 26 February 2016

the airport should as soon as reasonably possible update its ASAS and AMP to reflect its expansion plans. We are working with airport operators to assess the status of their master plans and surface access strategies, and the extent to which these need to be refreshed.

We note the Committee's comments about the current arrangements for setting, monitoring and enforcement of mode share targets. As part of our work to develop a new aviation policy framework, we will review our guidance on airport master plans, surface access strategies and air transport forums, including the recommendations on monitoring and enforcement of mode share, to see whether there is a case for change.

Recommendation 3 – We welcome the Civil Aviation Authority's review of the market structure for surface access, but urge the need for it to strike a careful balance between fairness to motorists and deterring any increase in the number of private vehicle journeys to airports that might be a result of a loosening of the penalty regime. The Government must also plan for the effects of any significant transfer from car to public transport as a result of demand management measures on cars. Integrated transport planning around airports will ensure that an appropriate balance between public transport and car is achieved. The Government should prioritise integrated transport planning for airport surface access for this reason. (Paragraph 32)

The Government also welcomes the Civil Aviation Authority's review of surface access at UK airports. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the provision of surface access services to passengers is easily understood and that those services provide good value for money. We await the outcomes of the review with interest.

We believe that airport operators and local stakeholders are best placed to determine the mode share targets that are appropriate for their airport, and to include measures for delivering those targets in their airport surface access strategies. Where an airport's strategy for delivering its mode share targets includes demand management measures on cars, we would expect the strategy to also consider the impacts that introduction of demand management measures would have on public transport. We would expect the airport operator to engage with this Department, and with other interested parties on any plans of this nature, to ensure that the impacts can be properly planned for.

We agree that integrated transport is essential. DfT's five case model for business case preparation is designed to support this by allowing us to assess whether any proposed surface access intervention is appropriate, and is the best one for the airport, its passengers and for non-airport traffic, including the impacts the intervention might have on other modes.

Our long-term planning on the road and rail networks considers where improvements to one transport mode can provide alternatives to enhancements on another. This approach enables us to examine transport investments over a 30 year period and consider what blend of transport is the right choice in individual cases.

Recommendation 4 – We and our predecessor committees have been calling on the Department for Transport to introduce smart ticketing to a nationally recognised standard for almost a decade. Delivery has been patchy. Oyster and contactless go from strength to strength across Greater London and we welcome Transport for London's enthusiasm for rolling it out across all modes of transport and beyond the traditional London boundaries.

We also support the work of other conurbations, particularly as part of their devolution deals, to extend urban smart ticketing to local airports. The Department has been slow to act, choosing to wait for other bodies and for the commercial sector to act; it should do more to lead. We recommend that the Department work with airport operators, airlines and others to devise a workable and affordable system for offering integrated ticketing across all public surface transport modes and airlines for inbound passengers to the UK (Paragraph 39)

Across the south-east, good progress has been made in delivering smart ticketing on the rail network. Five train operators are participating in the South East Flexible Ticketing (SEFT) programme: Govia Thameslink Railway, South West Trains, Abellio Greater Anglia, c2c and Southeastern. Together, these five operators cover 73% of the commuter market, including routes to major airports. From January 2016, Oyster and contactless payment were delivered on the rail route to and from Gatwick Airport.

The Government believes that individual operators and transport authorities are best placed to design and deliver schemes that best suit the needs of the people in the region, such as the Pop PAYG smartcard in Newcastle and the national m-ticketing bus ticket trial funded by industry, with intervention from Local Government and city regions as they require to meet their objectives.

The Government believes that the provision of integrated ticketing options for passengers travelling to the UK also sits firmly with industry. We would encourage airlines to design ticketing options, or to agree promotions with surface transport providers, as appropriate to meet the needs of its passengers. For example, Blue Islands Airways is currently offering a London via Southampton promotional package, when flying from Guernsey. Passengers purchasing a Blue Islands flight to or from Southampton are offered the chance to book a train ticket through the South West trains portal at a promotional rate.

Recommendation 5 – The Department must clarify how combined authorities, LEPs, regional transport bodies (including Transport for the North) and the National Infrastructure Commission will work together—and where the ultimate decision-making power lies—to integrate ticketing systems, especially in the North. (Paragraph 39)

In the 2015 Northern Transport Strategy and Autumn Statement, the Chancellor committed to introduce integrated and smart ticketing across the North and announced a £150m budget to support this. In March 2016 jointly with Transport for the North (TfN), we published the first annual update report on development of the Northern Transport Strategy. The report sets out progress across the full range of the transport strategy, covering roads, rail, smart and integrated travel, freight, international and strategic local connectivity including an implementation plan for Smart North – the programme to deliver simplified fares, integrated ticketing and improved online passenger information across all the North's public transport.

Responsibility for delivering the Autumn Statement commitment sits with Transport for the North, working with other parts of Local Government and the rail and bus industry, who will each work together to deliver such a scheme. This commitment is reflected as a key commitment in a number of City Deals, including those for Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, North East and Sheffield City Region. The Department will

continue to be engaged, with the Smart Cities Partnership in tracking delivery. Beyond that it will be for cities to decide to what extent they wish to use this approach to support delivery, for example by sharing best practice and identifying common issues.

Recommendation 6 – As a first step the DfT should publish plans which show how it will improve signposting to, and information about, public surface transport options to and from UK airports. (Paragraph 39)

The Government believes that airport operators are best placed to provide information to their customers about the public transport options available to them. There is already a lot of good practice in this area, for example, Southampton Airport has a computer system, located in the arrivals hall, which provides live public transport updates, and the websites of all the airports covered by this inquiry have clear links from the airport homepage to explain how passengers can travel to and from the airport by road, rail, bus, coach or taxi.

The Government encourages airport operators to work with Network Rail, train operating companies, and bus and coach operators to ensure that clear signage and information about connections to airports is available at stations and bus/coach interchanges.

The CAA's review of market conditions for surface access to airports is considering whether transparent information is in place to ensure customers are well informed about the options they have to access UK airports. We will, of course, carefully consider the outcomes of the CAA's work in this area.

Planning for future demand

Recommendation 7 – We recommend that, in its forthcoming draft National Policy Statement on airports, the Department set out its policy for addressing long-term airport capacity issues and the surface access implications of these. This policy should include measures for improving access to airports with existing spare capacity. (Paragraph 46)

In December 2015, the Government announced that it would begin work straight away on preparing the building blocks for an airports National Policy Statement in line with the Planning Act 2008. The Airports National Policy Statement will provide the planning framework for a future Development Consent Order for additional runway capacity in the South East of England, which may include surface access implications associated with that additional capacity.

Airports right across the UK play a vital part in maintaining our international connectivity. The Government supports other airports making best use of their existing runway capacity. In its interim report, the Airports Commission recommended some surface access investments to help make airports with spare capacity more attractive to airlines and passengers.

Government has made good progress in implementing those recommendations. These include making £50m from DfT available towards the £123m scheme to Gatwick Airport Station (subject to a satisfactory final business case to be finalised by late 2016/7). The introduction of the first of a fleet of new Gatwick Express trains which are configured

with additional luggage stacks, 2+2 seating as well as providing easier boarding and alighting for airport passengers and the introduction of Oyster Pay as You Go (PAYG) and contactless bank card (CPAY) at Gatwick Airport and 5 other stations along the route.

In the case of Stansted Airport the Government is co-funding a study with Essex County Council, into dualling the last single carriageway section between Stansted and the A12 ('Braintree to Marks Tey') and has created a West Anglia Task Force which is assessing and making recommendations on overall future rail service needs in West Anglia and NE London areas including meeting the needs of Stansted Airport. In addition over £1bn of rail investment in the north of England which will enable new services to operate from North East Lancashire and West Yorkshire to and from Manchester Airport.

Recommendation 8 – We recommend that the Department sets out, in its response to this Report, how it expects local authorities, Highways England and Network Rail to cooperate to keep the existing networks operating effectively and what steps it will take towards eliminating planned road and rail closures on the same route at the same time. (Paragraph 47)

Highways England and Network Rail both operate under licences which contain general provisions in relation to cooperation with other organisations and stakeholders.

In accordance with these provisions, we expect Network Rail and Highways England, to consult with key stakeholders such as airports, train operating companies, Transport for London and local highway authorities in good time ahead of any major changes or planned disruptions to networks or services, to ensure that passengers' needs can be catered for. We also expect them to engage with each other to coordinate any planned work so that it takes account of the overall impact on the transport network. We believe such engagement is already generally good, and that any move to prescribe the nature of this consultation and engagement would be unnecessary. We believe that it is better for Network Rail, Highways England and local transport authorities to use their judgement based on the specific circumstances, case-by-case.

In most cases maintenance and improvement work is planned many months in advance so that passengers and road users have time to plan their journeys to and from the airport.

Planning surface access schemes

Recommendation 9 – It remains an issue of concern to us that having committed to spending £55 billion on the HS2 rail project – which we welcome – the Department has provided no evidence of how it plans to best leverage the new capacity generated by the project to deliver improvements to our key international gateways, particularly our airports. We recommend that the Government draw up plans showing how the HS2 network will link to regional airports so that the plans being drawn up by airports, local authorities and Network Rail can take this into account and individual projects can be prioritised accordingly (Paragraph 72)

HS2 will play an important role in improving access to major and regional airports across the UK. DfT and HS2 Ltd are working closely with airport operators, local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Highways England and Network Rail to ensure airport access across the transport network is the very best.

When HS2 opens in 2026 the interchange at Old Oak Common will provide HS2 passengers with a connection to frequent rail services direct to Heathrow Airport via Crossrail and Heathrow Express. The station will be served by direct trains from all HS2 destinations – and will therefore provide faster and easier access to Heathrow from across the Midlands and the North.

Birmingham Interchange will be a new ‘parkway’ station on the HS2 phase one line – opening in 2026 – serving the West Midlands. As part of this a high capacity people mover is planned to provide passenger access from the HS2 station to the National Exhibition Centre (1.5km), Birmingham International station (1.9km) and Birmingham Airport terminal (2.3km). The journey from Interchange station to the Birmingham Airport will take approximately six minutes.

The Government intends to announce a preferred route decision on Phase Two of HS2 in the autumn, at which time we will further information about HS2’s plans to improve connectivity to regional airports. It is intended that Phase Two will open in 2033. We remain of the view that a HS2 station at Manchester Airport is the right option for a station site, subject to agreeing an appropriate local funding contribution to the costs. It will provide for a high speed railway market encompassing potential passengers in the south of Greater Manchester and in neighbouring Cheshire. It will be served by direct HS2 trains from the Midlands and South East.

A preferred route decision on Phase Two of HS2 will be published in the autumn, at which time we will provide an update of the plans through which HS2 will improve connectivity to regional airports.

Recommendation 10 – With reference to the Airports Commission report, we call on the Government to explain how it will address the reduction in domestic connectivity caused by a loss of domestic air slots at Heathrow and how it will develop the subsidised public service operator network set out in the Airport Commission’s report. (Paragraph 72)

The Government is aware that the number of domestic UK destinations served from Heathrow has declined over a number of years. The scope for Government to influence airlines’ decision-making is extremely limited, as airlines make commercially-based decisions about which routes they fly, and to which airports, based on their own assessment of routes’ viability.

In light of the Airports Commission recommendation we will be considering the UK’s domestic and regional air connectivity within the preparatory groundwork for the announcement we expect to make this summer on airport capacity.

The Government has responded to some regions’ fears of losing existing and important air connections between other UK airports and London, by making funds available via the ‘Regional Air Connectivity Fund’ to maintain regional air access to London through Public Service Obligations (PSOs) where there was the probability that an existing air service might be withdrawn from London. The Government is providing financial support via PSOs for two routes to London: Newquay to Gatwick and Dundee to Stansted. The PSO criteria are determined by regulations agreed at the European level, and we are carefully considering the Airports Commission’s recommendation to extend the scope of PSOs.

Recommendation 11 – Traffic to and from airports may be only a small component of the total traffic on the network and these routes may not get the attention from the network operators they need. The Government should require Network Rail and Highways England to demonstrate in their strategic business plans how they have considered airport surface access strategies, making clear which plans for improvements to surface access will be progressed and how they have consulted airport operators, LEPs and local authorities, on the relative priority that should be given to such schemes. (Paragraph 73)

The Government agrees that airport surface access is an important factor which should be considered by Network Rail and Highways England in their strategic business plans. The rail High Level Output Specification (HLOS) and our Roads Investment Strategy (RIS), which set out the vision and outputs against which Highways England and Network Rail must develop and deliver their programmes, both include the objective of improving access to airports. It is our view that Highways England and Network Rail's processes for developing and delivering the HLOS and the RIS already provide for airport surface access to be given due consideration.

The Government is now looking ahead to future road and rail investment strategies. Airport surface access will continue to feature prominently in our planning. On the railways, the first iteration of proposals for the control period 6 (CP6) planning period is coordinated by Network Rail and is expected before the end of the year. As part of this process Network Rail will continue to consider airport surface access strategies and consult with interested stakeholders, including airport operators.

On roads, the Government outlined its aims and process for preparing its second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) on 16th March 2016. This makes clear that in preparing RIS2 (to cover the period 2020–2025) the Government will be conscious of the need to provide good strategic road connections to airports. The preparation of RIS 2 is a three stage process, beginning with research, including public consultation.

As part of the research phase, Highways England will develop its refreshed programme of route strategies to update the existing evidence base on pressures and needs across the entire strategic road network. To this end Highways England will continue to consider airport surface access strategies and to engage with airport operators, as well as a wide range of organisations and individuals, including strategic transport bodies, local Government, local enterprise partnerships, business groups and environmental organisations. In addition, airport operators are already helping DfT and Highways England look at connectivity issues on the M60, M62 and M25, through their participation in the Manchester Orbital North West Quadrant Study, the Trans-Pennine Tunnel Strategic Study, and the M25 South West Quadrant Strategic Study. These studies will further inform decisions on investment in the strategic road network after 2020.

Recommendation 12 – The Department should set out more clearly its policy on, and expectations for modal shift. We recommend that the Department develop a strategic plan for modal shift across the whole road network, with feeder routes to airports being a key part of that. This policy should underpin the development of national transport networks, as well as airport Master Plans and Surface Access Strategies (Paragraph 74)

As highlighted in response to recommendation 3, in general, the Government believes that increasing the public transport share of airport users is desirable. Airport operators and local stakeholders are best placed to determine the mode share targets that are appropriate for their airport, and to include measures for delivering those targets in their airport surface access strategies. This approach recognises that there is no 'one size fits all' solution, and that different targets and proposals for meeting those targets will be appropriate for different areas.

Across England, the Government is investing unprecedented amounts of money to provide airport passengers and staff with modern, reliable public transport options. The Government believes that we should continue to make our investment decisions on a case by case basis by forecasting future growth and considering all relevant information through its five case model for business case preparation, including airport surface access strategies. The best modal share solution will depend on the local circumstances, including the nature and location of existing transport networks and the passenger demographic.

Who pays?

Recommendation 13 – The Department is understandably wary about falling foul of the state aid rules and successive Governments have held a settled view that where the primary beneficiary of a surface access improvement is the airport, the airport should pay. We recommend that this principle is retained and the Department should develop clear guidance as to how it and other public bodies (LEPs, councils, combined authorities etc.) should assess the benefit of new surface access schemes to (a) airports and (b) the wider community. (Paragraph 88)

Recommendation 14 – We recommend that the Government clarify what constitutes a transport scheme that is primarily for the benefit of a private party, as opposed to providing a benefit secondary to a wider public interest, using real examples to illustrate where, in its view, the boundary sits. (Paragraph 88)

The Government has been clear that it expects the scheme promoter to meet the costs of any surface access proposals that are required as a direct result of airport expansion and from which they will directly benefit. We welcome your recommendation that this principle is retained. We are currently working on providing further clarity on the types of surface access schemes we believe are primarily for the benefit of an airport, such that the airport operator should pay for the scheme.

The Government has also been working on developing an approach for calculating how costs should be split between dual major beneficiaries, where one of the beneficiaries is an airport operator.

Airports funding surface access investments will typically look to recover these costs through their charges to users (airlines, and ultimately passengers and cargo owners). For economically regulated airports, this requires the agreement of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the airport regulator. We have been engaging with the CAA to ensure that any guidance the government produces, is consistent with the CAA's policy on surface access investments.

Recommendation 15 – We recommend that the Government require any airport operator making a successful application to expand their airport to assess the effect of their plans on local transport networks, to work with infrastructure operators on the measures needed to provide relief for any damaging impact, and to make a contribution to the cost of such improvements. In cases where there is compelling evidence that airport expansion would act as a catalyst for significant local economic development, the Government should work in partnership with local authorities and airports to identify relevant surface access infrastructure improvements and help to develop a multi-party funding solution (Paragraph 89).

The Aviation Policy Framework is clear that proposals for airport development must be accompanied by surface access proposals which demonstrate how the airport will minimise congestion and other local impacts. It is also clear that developers should pay the costs of upgrading or enhancing road, rail or other transport networks or services where there is a need to cope with additional passengers travelling to and from expanded airports.

The Government's National Policy Statement for National Networks states that the impacts on other transport networks will always need to be considered, assessed and mitigated as part of the planning application and approvals process for schemes. As part of the consenting process for these projects, scheme promoters are expected to collaborate closely with other network providers at an early stage. This will help support better integration across networks managed by different operators.

Where an infrastructure scheme is required on the local road network to support increased capacity at an airport, the airport operator would need to consult with the local planning authority to ensure that the proposals are consistent with the local plan. If the airport would have an impact on neighbouring planning authorities they would need to ensure that their proposals also complied with those local plans.

The Government would encourage airports to consider how their expansion proposals might support local economic growth and rejuvenation and to work with local authorities and LEPs on funding options for their transport projects. Some airports have been particularly proactive in this regard, for example Luton which has benefitted from a number of transport projects, eg the Luton Dunstable Busway and the M1 junction 10a improvement scheme, which have wider local economic benefits and for which a multi-party funding solution was agreed.

Recommendation 16 – We are encouraged by evidence from local authorities that speaks positively of the current and hopefully future benefits of devolution. We want to see areas taking advantage of new financial powers to prioritise and fund their own infrastructure projects without having to wait for the agreement of or money from the Department. We want to see local areas use these new powers to help their local airports grow and develop in a sustainable way, to drive further economic growth. However, we seek guarantees from the Government that those areas that cannot reach agreement on a devolution deal, or do not want one, are not left behind. (Paragraph 96).

A third of the population of England is now covered by devolution deals, devolving significant powers, control over billions of pounds in investment and strengthening local

ability to bring forward land to deliver housing. The Government has been clear that the door is open to any area to come forward with devolution proposals, and aims to support all areas to reach their economic potential.

Areas that do not have devolution deals are still able to access significant sums through funding streams such as the Local Growth Fund, for which we have just announced a new competitive funding round with £1.8bn available for infrastructure to support growth, and through the new £475m large major transport schemes fund. The role of LEPs is crucial in these areas yet to agree a devolution deal.

Recommendation 17 – Where devolution deals have been put in place, we recommend that Government conduct a robust post-hoc evaluation to assess the benefits of devolution deals to local transport. (Paragraph 96)

DfT provides guidance on robust post-hoc evaluation for Local Major transport schemes. The largest and complex transport schemes funded through the Local Growth Fund will follow similar processes as those currently in place for Local Major schemes, with an evaluation plan being agreed with DfT before final approval and subsequent evaluation reports also being agreed by DfT.

Local areas, in partnership with Government, are required to develop evaluation plans which will consider the impact of policies devolved through devolution deals. We would expect some of these plans to cover the impact of transport commitments; for example, places in receipt of Gainshare/Investment Funds have collaborated to commission an independent panel to monitor and evaluate the impact of that expenditure. Crucially, in areas introducing directly elected Mayors, local people will also have a greater chance to have their say on the performance of their leaders, through the ballot box.

Recommendation 18 – In its response to this report, the Government must clarify the roles that Transport for the North and the National Infrastructure Commission will play in improving surface access to airports, and how they will work with combined authorities and LEPs to achieve this (Paragraph 97)

The Government has set up the National Infrastructure Commission, chaired by Lord Adonis, to produce a clear picture of the future infrastructure the country needs and to provide expert, independent advice on infrastructure priorities. The Commission currently operates in interim form. In preparing its National Infrastructure Assessment and studies on specific infrastructure challenges, the Commission will draw on a robust evidence base and consult with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, which is likely to include LEPs and combined authorities.

On 15th March, the National Infrastructure Commission published High Speed North, one of its first three reports. The report includes recommendations which would enhance rail connectivity between Liverpool and Manchester, including Manchester Airport. It also includes recommendations for the strategic road network which include the prioritisation of development funding for further enhancements to the northern road network, including upgrades to the M56 (junctions 6–8) around Manchester Airport.

Transport for the North brings together local representatives from across the North of England to allow the North to speak with a single voice to Government on its transport

priorities – a crucial new role adding substantial value through enhancing the existing relationships between local and central government and filling an important gap to plan strategic transport networks and connectivity across the north of England.

Identifying surface access improvements to increase the attractiveness of Northern Airports to both passengers and airlines is part of Transport for the North's vision. This is evidenced in The Northern Transport Strategy: Spring 2016 Report published in March, which reports that options have been identified to achieve reductions in journey times and increases in frequency and capacity between the largest cities and Manchester airport.

Recommendation 19 – If TfN is to play an effective role, the Government must provide it with adequate powers to ensure that integrated transport planning which benefits airport passengers and local commuters is not thwarted by a lack of cooperation from local areas. (Paragraph 97)

Following Royal Assent of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, which allows for the creation of Sub-national Transport Bodies, work is underway to put Transport for the North on a statutory footing through secondary legislation. The Government is also working closely with Transport for the North and others to ensure as far as possible that decisions reflect shared priorities for transport investment.

Conclusion

The Government is grateful to all those who provided evidence to this inquiry and to the Committee for its thorough consideration of this important subject.