**CIHT Response to “Invest 2035: the UK’s modern industrial strategy”**

**Full strategy:** [Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6711176c386bf0964853d747/industrial-strategy-green-paper.pdf)

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) is a charity, learned society and membership body, with over 10,000 members across 12 UK regions and a number of international groups. CIHT represents and qualifies professionals who plan, design, build, manage, maintain and operate transport and infrastructure.

**Sector Methodology**

1. **How should the UK government identify the most important subsectors for delivering our objectives?**

CIHT welcome the focus on the 8 strategic sectors, especially those supporting green industries and new technologies. We appreciate that historical data on productivity guided the sector selection, as outlined briefly in the strategy (p. 18–19). However, the current methodology overlooks sector interdependencies and the essential role of critical services - transport being a prime example.

By grouping transport with “warehousing and transportation” (CHART 2, p.17), the strategy limits recognition of transport’s wider role in supporting the economy and society. While transport logistics is recognised as an enabler of business investment and growth, its contribution towards the success of the strategy appears to be understated, neglecting the fact that movement of people (e.g. commuters and tourists) and data all play a vital role in underpinning the economy. CIHT is concerned that this could delay critical investment and reduce efforts to address transport-related barriers for economic growth.

Transport is often overlooked in strategic planning in the UK, despite its fundamental role in running the economy and supporting society. [CIHT has long advocated for integrating transport into broader economic and land-use strategies](CIHT%20Responds%20to%20Proposed%20reforms%20to%20the%20National%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework%20%7C%20CIHT)[[1]](#footnote-2). Transport needs to be recognised as an essential service and transport infrastructure as a vital capital asset.

As outlined in CIHT’s manifesto, [A transport network fit for all our futures | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/policy-technical/a-transport-network-fit-for-all-our-futures/)[[2]](#footnote-3), a robust transport network is essential to achieving the UK industrial strategy’s core objectives. Having effective and accessible highways, transportation networks and services will stimulate the UK economy, increase employment opportunities, improve air quality, deliver on net zero and improve the health of society.

Transport is the highest emitter of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions [[3]](#footnote-4), so transport decarbonisation is vital to any net-zero strategy. The sector’s supply chains are eager to transition but lack a unified, actionable plan to accelerate progress.

To refine the process of identifying key subsectors, we also recommend a broader analysis that includes global market trends, mega-trends, and a thorough SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and PESTLE (political, economic, social, environmental, legal) analysis of the UK economy, remembering to identify key interests in the devolved nations and regional economies. Traditional forecasting methods based on “predict and provide” are not reliable under current and future uncertainty. The UK should proactively assess a full spectrum of risks, as outlined in the [World Economic Forum’s Global Risks Report](https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/digest)[[4]](#footnote-5). The coming decade will demand resilience and adaptability to navigate diverse potential futures, with proactive risk management helping shape a positive path forward.

The government should also learn from past experiences, such as the geo-political impacts of leaving the European Union, which have shown the importance of stable and resilient transport flows for maintaining a strong economy.

1. **How should the UK government account for emerging sectors and technologies for which conventional data sources are less appropriate?**

No comment

1. **How should the UK government incorporate foundational sectors and value chains into this analysis?**

Transport underpins all other sectors vital to the economy and society and delivers the following benefits:

Regional and local economic performance:

* Transport infrastructure is crucial for regional growth by increasing connectivity of human and physical resources. Effective transport links enable market accessibility by boosting their attractiveness for inward investors, particularly for peripheral areas by supporting local productivity and business growth.

Productivity and logistics:

* Transport plays a strategic role in firms’ logistics, production, and distribution, affecting travel times, reliability, and flexibility. Transport networks shape firms’ choices on distribution and sourcing, which impacts overall productivity, logistics and regional economic activity.
* Investments in transport infrastructure can enhance productivity, optimise location choices, and improve operational efficiency, benefiting the economy at large.
* Overall private investments gravitate towards areas with good transport connections, as an efficient transport system gives trust to investors.
* An unreliable transport and highways network means lost working hours, which has a direct impact on productivity.

Employment Opportunities:

* Accessible, reliable, public transport and highway networks expand access to the labour market, influencing where people live and their employment choices. Similarly, limited or unreliable transport restricts job access and mobility.
* Prioritising robust public transport infrastructure can boost employment accessibility and improve workforce participation.

Health:

* Investment in infrastructure for active travel, such as walking, wheeling (i.e. using a wheelchair or mobility scooters), and cycling, is essential for public health. A well-maintained network of active travel infrastructure contributes to a healthier, more productive, society.
* Physical activity is key to promoting strong mental and physical health and active travel serves as an effective way to encourage people to incorporate more physical activity into their lives on a day-to-day basis.
* Strengthening active travel infrastructure, underscores the Government’s commitment to a fit, healthy, population and resilient economy and facilitates a preventative and proactive approach to both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Environment:

* The transport sector must be central to addressing climate challenges, given the sector’s emissions profile. Climate resilience across transport, energy, water, and food networks is critical, as extreme weather increasingly disrupts economic stability.
* As stated in [CIHT’s Manifesto](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/policy-technical/a-transport-network-fit-for-all-our-futures/)[[5]](#footnote-6) and our recent report [Delivering a resilient transport network maintaining | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/resilience)[[6]](#footnote-7) , the highways and transportation sector requires serious prioritisation in this period of climate emergency. As ageing assets are increasingly exhausted in service of the economy, asset failures will only increase, unless there is a major realisation that the greater intensity and frequency of adverse weather events will see many vulnerable parts of our transport system reach their tipping points.

We recommend the government make it clear to each sector and subsector what benefits to society they will bring and how funding will be directed for the improvement of social equity, decarbonisation and overall resilience to climate change.

We also urge the government to analyse the interdependencies between sectors, subsectors and foundational sectors and recognise that they are all underpinned by value chains, where transport and highways are essential.

**Sectors**

1. **What are the most important subsectors and technologies that the UK government should focus on and why?**

The professional and business services sector and the digital and technologies sector have already been identified as key sectors. CIHT recommends the government should focus on the subsectors and technologies below within this sector:

* **Roads and transportation** (including rail and ports) are a foundational sector that is critical to the effective mobilisation of labour and the efficient movement of goods
* **Low/ No carbon materials and procurement processes** are essential to meet the UK’s Net Zero Target while keep improving and delivering the built environment and infrastructure the UK economy needs. CIHT’s report [Building carbon reduction into procurement processes | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/building-carbon-reduction-into-procurement-processes/)[[7]](#footnote-8) highlights the importance of embedding carbon considerations in the supply chain and contracts.
* **Data and artificial intelligence** linked to transport decarbonisation, as highlighted in CIHT’s report [The role of data and artificial intelligence in achieving transport decarbonisation | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/the-role-of-data-and-artificial-intelligence-in-achieving-transport-decarbonisation/)[[8]](#footnote-9). Specifically, AI and new technologies can:
	+ Accelerate modal shift to public transport and active travel by creating reliable databases on sustainable transport use; optimising traffic flow in favour of active travel and public transport; and monitoring the condition of active travel infrastructure.
	+ Decarbonise road transport and how we get our goods by aiding site selection of public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints; managing grid capacity for EV charging; and reducing congestion, improving traffic flow, and improving road safety to avoid traffic incidents.
	+ Delivering and maintaining low-carbon infrastructure by predicting asset life cycles; analysing the integrity of existing assets; and recommending low-carbon infrastructure.
1. **What are the UK’s strengths and capabilities in these sub sectors?**

The UK has world class transport and highway consultants and contractors – many of whom have global reach. The quality of professional expertise to plan, design and maintain our core infrastructure is one of the UK’s assets. However, this expertise can only be maintained if there is a clear plan of investment in the transport and highways sector to ensure a pipeline of work.

1. **What are the key enablers and barriers to growth in these sub sectors and how could the UK government address them?**

One of the main barriers to growth and private investment within the built environment sector (transport, housing, energy, waste and water infrastructure) has been the stop-start approach to funding allocation from the government. The uncertainty and fluctuations in funding and planning have created instability, delaying long-term infrastructure projects and sector growth.

The UK’s transport network faces several weaknesses, including pressure points that are increasingly susceptible to extreme weather events. While the UK has a strong foundation of professional expertise to plan, design, and maintain infrastructure, a clear investment plan is essential. This investment would not only improve network resilience but also support productivity through effective construction projects, helping to create a sustainable network for industry.

As CIHT highlighted in our recent analysis of the [Autumn Budget 2024](https://www.ciht.org.uk/news/ciht-analysis-of-autumn-budget-2024/)[[9]](#footnote-10), certainty of funding will provide confidence for contractors and consultants during tenders and will contribute to stable pipelines of works for the upcoming years, maintaining and creating more high skilled jobs.

An additional barrier is the current shortage of engineering professionals, together with gaps in the labour market in specialised skills in data and AI. Addressing these shortages with targeted data and training could foster a more skilled workforce aligned with future infrastructure needs.

**Business Environment**

1. **What are the most significant barriers to investment? Do they vary across the growth-driving sectors? What evidence can you share to illustrate this?**

The following barriers are currently impacting investments:

1. As mentioned in Q6, short-term public funding, especially for capital investments, and continuous reallocation of money has made investments unstable and lowered trust for private investors.
2. Skills shortage within the transportation sector and wider engineering also make the sector and industry less appealing as investors and businesses fear they will not be able to find employees with the right knowledge and experience.
3. Lack of integration between land use regulation and transport planning. [CIHT highlighted](https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/32keo2df/ciht-response-to-nppf-september-2024.pdf)[[10]](#footnote-11) the need for better integration of sustainable transport into the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the need for transport issues to be taken into consideration from the earliest stages of plan-making. There is a clear need for better integration of land use planning and transportation. Land use has a strong influence on demand for freight and passenger movements, which in turn impacts the mobility patterns of both goods and people. An evidence-based approach is needed to ensure that industrial sites are located in areas where transport connectivity needs are met sustainably and efficiently. Choosing sites that lack the appropriate connectivity can be wasteful because of the cost of building the transport infrastructure required to service them.
4. As stated in CIHT report [Building carbon reduction into procurement processes | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/building-carbon-reduction-into-procurement-processes/)[[11]](#footnote-12) long procurement processes and a lack of coherent guidance to how to include decarbonisation has impacted contractors when applying for bids and delivering projects.

**Business Environment – People and Skills**

1. **Where you identified barriers in response to Question 7 which relate to people and skills (including issues such as delivery of employment support, careers, and skills provision), what UK government policy solutions could best address these?**

The UK’s need for a workforce with the skills that better match industry needs has been well established. We know that skill-shortage vacancies have been increasing in recent times and could now account for over [one-third of all job vacancies](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65855506fc07f3000d8d46bd/Employer_skills_survey_2022_research_report.pdf%2C%20p17)[[12]](#footnote-13). The engineering sector, of which transport is part, is unfortunately a part of this skills shortage problem. It is estimated that there will be [173,000 more, new jobs](https://www.engineeringuk.com/research-policy/industry-workforce/engineering-skills-needs-now-and-into-the-future/) in engineering and technology by 2030[[13]](#footnote-14).

In our manifesto [A transport network fit for all our futures | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/policy-technical/a-transport-network-fit-for-all-our-futures/)[[14]](#footnote-15), we call for the government to ensure there is a workforce with the right capacity and capability to work in future economic and climate uncertainty by:

* Investing in a wider pool of people from a broader range of backgrounds to have professionals who are aware of the complex societal, environmental and economic challenges we face.
* Improving routes into the engineering profession
* Working with the sector and bodies like CIHT to review the challenges and opportunities for recruitment and develop a clear plan for appropriate national transport skills strategies.

CIHT also calls for sustained investment in roads and transport through long-term funded programmes. A “pipeline of certainty” sends the right signals to employers to invest in people and projects, and also to young people to identify fruitful careers. To do otherwise leaves sectors, such as construction, lacking UK-based talent at a time when critical infrastructure needs urgent upgrading or adaptation to maintain a reliable transport network and reduce logistics costs for industry.

1. **What more could be done to achieve a step change in employer investment in training in the growth-driving sectors?**

More use could be made of professional institutions, such as the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, whose vision is “*to advance, for public benefit, the science and art associated with highways and transportation infrastructure and services and to promote associated education, training, research and development*.” Ensuring public sector contracts are only awarded to organisations who have professionally qualified staff, would be the easiest way to ensure that employers invest in training for their staff.

**Business Environment - Innovation**

1. **Where you identified barriers in response to Question 7 which relate to RDI and technology adoption and diffusion, what policy solutions could best address these?**

No comment

1. **What are the barriers to R&D commercialisation that the UK government should be considering?**

No comment

**Business Environment – Data**

1. **How can the UK government best use data to support the delivery of the Industrial Strategy?**

No comment

1. **What challenges or barriers to sharing or accessing data could the UK government remove to help improve business operations and decision making?**

One of the current barriers to using data more, is the inconsistent way data is collected and managed. As stated in [The role of data and artificial intelligence in achieving transport decarbonisation | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/data%26ai),[[15]](#footnote-16) there is currently no consistent guidance in how to:

* Identify data gaps, what data has not been collected or is missing.
* Collect information, knowing what and how much data to collect and the best methods to do this.
* Securely store the data collected
* Analyse data, knowing how to draw meaningful conclusions and present them effectively
* Convert data to standard format and units, to enable comparisons across the sector from other projects.

**Business Environment - Infrastructure**

1. **Where you identified barriers in response to Question 7 which relate to planning, infrastructure and transport, what UK government policy solutions could best address these in addition to existing reforms? How can this best support regional growth?**

In relation to point 1, 3 and 4 identified in Q7, we suggest:

* As stated in [A transport network fit for all our futures | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/policy-technical/a-transport-network-fit-for-all-our-futures/)[[16]](#footnote-17), government need to provide clear, long-term aims on how we will use the transport network and support this with long-term transport investments (at least 10–20 years);
* Planning rules should encourage place-based solutions that create attractive built environments and lessen the need to travel. Planning should also support and promote the availability of local services and provide people with real choices and appropriate alternatives to private car use. Closer integration of transport and planning is needed to ensure that housing development meets the needs of people, not cars. The government’s intended programme of planning reform must address the critical interrelation of land use and transport planning. As outlined in our [response](https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/32keo2df/ciht-response-to-nppf-september-2024.pdf)[[17]](#footnote-18) to the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reforms, some positive steps have been made with the inclusion of a ‘vision-led’ approach to transport planning and a more strategic approach to cross-boundary planning;
* National and local governments should drive decarbonisation through procurement by using their purchasing power to show leadership in how this can be done, making carbon reduction a requirement in their own procurement policies and draw on the recommendations in the [Building carbon reduction into procurement processes | CIHT](https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/building-carbon-reduction-into-procurement-processes/)[[18]](#footnote-19) report to drive change and provide vision and clarity of direction.
1. **How can investment into infrastructure support the Industrial Strategy? What can the UK government do to better support this and facilitate co-investment? How does this differ across infrastructure classes?**

Please refer to Q3 where the benefits of investing in transport and its infrastructure are explained.

There needs to be greater awareness of the effects of climate change. Vulnerable locations often experience multi-sector impacts, e.g. transport, drainage, energy supplies. Co-planning and co-investment are needed to best serve society generally, and business in particular, to avoid critical blockages in the nation’s connectivity.

**Business Environment - Energy**

1. **What are the barriers to competitive industrial activity and increased electrification, beyond those set out in response to the UK government’s recent Call for Evidence on industrial electrification?**

No comment

1. **What examples of international best practice to support businesses on energy, for example Purchase Power Agreements, would you recommend toincrease investment and growth?**

No comment

**Business Environment - Competition**

1. **Where you identified barriers in response to Question 7 which relate to competition, what evidence can you share to illustrate their impact and what solutions could best address them?**

No comment

1. **How can regulatory and competition institutions best drive market dynamism to boost economic activity and growth?**

No comment

**Business Environment - Regulation**

1. **Do you have suggestions on where regulation can be reformed or introduced to encourage growth and innovation, including addressing any barriers you identified in Question 7?**

CIHT cautions the government against increasing regulation unless there is clear justification for it, as this will only drive up costs for no discernible benefit. Regulation works best when it is outcome focussed rather than input driven.

**Business Environment – Crowding in Investment**

1. **What are the main factors that influence businesses’ investment decisions? Do these differ for the growth-driving sectors and based on the nature of the investment (e.g. buildings, machinery & equipment, vehicles, software, RDI, workforce skills) and types of firms (large, small, domestic, international, across different regions)?**

No comment

**Business Environment – Mobilising Capital**

1. **What are the main barriers faced by companies who are seeking finance to scale up in the UK or by investors who are seeking to deploy capital, and do those barriers vary for the growth-driving sectors? How can addressing these barriers enable more global players in the UK?**

No comment

1. **The UK government currently seeks to support growth through a range of financial instruments including grants, loans, guarantees and equity. Are there additional instruments of which you have experience in other jurisdictions, which could encourage strategic investment?**

No comment

**Business Environment – Trade and International Partnerships**

1. **How can international partnerships (government-to-government or government-to-business) support the Industrial Strategy?**

No comment

1. **Which international markets do you see as the greatest opportunity for the growth-driving sectors and how does it differ by sector?**

No comment

**Place**

1. **Do you agree with this characterisation of clusters? Are there any additional characteristics of dimensions of cluster definition and strength we should consider, such as the difference between services clusters and manufacturing clusters?**

No comment

1. **What public and private sector interventions are needed to make strategic industrial sites ‘investment-ready’? How should we determine which sites across the UK are most critical for unlocking this investment?**

No comment

1. **How should the Industrial Strategy accelerate growth in city regions and clusters of growth sectors across the UK through Local Growth Plans and other policy mechanisms?**

No comment

1. **How should the Industrial Strategy align with devolved government economic strategies and support the sectoral strengths of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland?**

No comment

**Partnerships and Institutions**

1. **How can the Industrial Strategy Council best support the UK government to deliver and monitor the Industrial Strategy?**

The Industrial Strategy Council needs to ensure that it hears, and reflects, the voice of industry in its advice to government. This can be effectively done through close liaison with professional institutions such as the CIHT who have a broad range of members and partner organisations.

1. **How should the Industrial Strategy Council interact with key non-government institutions and organisations?**

CIHT offers its support to the government, as per the response to Q30 above, and looks forward to engaging to ensure that transport is recognised for its vital role in the UK and ensure that our transport network can better meet the needs of our economy, society and environment.

We also recommend the government to engage with cross industry forums and bodies that can identify cross-sectoral issues, gaps and knowledge. We encourage the government to engage with the [National Engineering Policy Centre](https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/)[[19]](#footnote-20) (NEPC), of which CIHT is a member.

1. **How can we improve the interface between the Industrial Strategy Council and government, business, local leaders and trade unions?**

Engaging with professional institutions such as CIHT.Professional institutions such as the CIHT have a broad range of members and partner organisations and already provide a seamless interface between central government, local government and businesses.

**Theory of Change**

1. **How could the analytical framework (e.g. identifying intermediate outcomes) for the Industrial Strategy be strengthened?**

No comment

1. **What are the key risks and assumptions we should embed in the logical model underpinning the Theory of Change?**

No comment

1. **How would you monitor and evaluate the Industrial Strategy, including metrics?**

No comment

**Additional Information**

1. **Is there any additional information you would like to provide?**

No comment

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