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Agreement to strengthen cross-Border cooperation

New declaration for Scotland and north of England to enhance connectivity

A new agreement will see Scotland and the north of England agree to work closer together to improve transport connectivity.

Infrastructure Secretary Keith Brown today led a delegation of political, civic and transport chiefs in Newcastle where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to enable a shared approach to achieving a transport network which will help realise the economic ambitions of Scotland and The Northern Powerhouse.

The document gives Scotland a voice in the Northern Transport Strategy being designed by the Transport for the North Partnership to inform Westminster's 'Northern Powerhouse' plans, and sets out a joint ambition to "radically enhance transport connectivity within and between the North of England and Scotland".

Mr Brown signed the MoU at the Improving Connectivity conference in the city, alongside Transport for the North's Board member Councillor Nick Forbes.

He said:

"The Scottish Government believes that investment in Scotland's transport is a key enabler for delivering sustainable growth by increasing competitiveness, supporting employment and opportunity. This commitment to investment in infrastructure can be seen in the great number of major transport projects we have delivered and are delivering – the Queensferry Crossing, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and the Borders Railway.

"Alongside these projects, extending a high speed rail link to Scotland will ensure that businesses in Scotland and the north of England are able to compete and grow, as well as boosting vital supply chain economies.

"We recognise the strong connection we have with our neighbours in the north of England and that there are important flows of labour and goods across the border. Investment on one side of that border can affect economic outcomes on the other, and we can maximise the return on investment by sharing views, aspirations and plans.

"I look forward to this Memorandum of Understanding contributing to a cross-border transport network that will benefit us all."

Councillor Forbes added:

"In the North of England we are determined to take charge of our own transport needs and ensure investment is directed to create more and better jobs. Transport for the North gives for the first time our businesses and communities a say in how our roads, railways and other transport links are developed for the future.

"Better connections to Scotland as well as between our major cities in the north will be vital in transforming our economies. From offshore engineering to tourism the North of England and Scotland are joined together in a way that brings great opportunities for growth. This Memorandum of Understanding shows how we will both do all we can to ensure the travelling public and businesses see the benefits of co-operation for years to come. "

John Cridland, Transport for the North Chair, said: "Our vision is all about transforming the north's transport connectivity to create a unified, single economy. It's an ambitious one, and strong collaboration with colleagues across both borders in Scotland and Wales will be a key element to achieving it.

"With MoUs now in place with both governments, today marks a significant step forward in our wider engagement plans and we look forward to driving forward a fruitful relationship for everyone involved."

The event was jointly organised with the Scottish Cities Alliance.

Chair of the Scottish Cities Alliance, Councillor Andrew Burns, said:

"We welcome this exciting partnership between Transport Scotland and Transport for the North which will help to improve connections between our great city regions and better our connectivity to key markets.

"Scotland's cities have a strong story to tell, and collaboratively we are making a significant impact in a very competitive environment. By working together the Alliance partners are able to share knowledge regarding our transport networks and create projects of scale that will deliver an economically stronger future for Scotland.

"We are hopeful that this new partnership will help deliver the infrastructure required to create better transport links that will further drive the economic success of our cities."

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Notes to Editors:

Background:

The agreement was signed at the conference Improving Transport connectivity for vibrant economies: An exchange platform for ideas and co-operation between Scotland and the north of England.

The event was held in Newcastle and organised by Transport Scotland in association with Transport for the North, the Scottish Cities Alliance and Newcastle City Council

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