

May 2025

Midlands
Connect

Midlands Rail Hub

The ticket to drive social mobility





Transport serves as a lifeline for everyone, one that connects people to economic opportunity, health and recreation, family and friends, and other important connections. It helps people to boost their mobility, to improve their quality of life and to reach their full potential.

Public transport is necessary in our society because it offers opportunity to those who do not have access to a car, those who are too young or too old to drive and otherwise experience barriers to the most widely used form of transportation.

At Midlands Connect, we are aware of the need to keep improving transport infrastructure in the Midlands and beyond. A key cornerstone of that is our flagship scheme, Midlands Rail Hub.

This report explores transport related social exclusion – put simply this is being unable to access opportunities, key services, and community life as much as you want to or need to. It means facing major obstacles in everyday life, being unable to access key destinations like the schools, hospitals or work. It really is that stark.

The benefits of Midlands Rail Hub will be felt across the country and will be the ticket to improve social mobility, particularly in areas with high levels of social exclusion. It can also support Government in delivering their vital missions.



Sir John Peace
Chair, Midlands Connect

Executive summary

Our research shows that 325,437 people within the Midlands Rail Hub catchment area are at risk of social exclusion. There are 8 districts with a ‘high’ or ‘highest’ risk areas. These are Derby, Tamworth, Birmingham, North Warwickshire, Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicester and Forest of Dean.

Areas south of Birmingham and communities between Birmingham and Leicester are notably impacted by transport-related social exclusion (TRSE). The percentage of population at social exclusion risk is nearly double the English average in North Warwickshire and the Forest of Dean. The Cinderford West area in the Forest of Dean in particular is in the top 1 percentile of TRSE risk in the whole of England.

Increasing rail service frequency in low social opportunity areas improves access to jobs, education, and essential services, reducing social exclusion. The Northumberland Line project demonstrates the effectiveness of such initiatives.

Furthermore, we believe that enhancing connections to our railways such as better bus links or bike-sharing schemes, can address accessibility gaps. The Greater Manchester Bee Network is a notable example of prioritising integrated transport options for underserved communities and something we are working on with our integrated ticketing scheme at Midlands Connect.



What is Midlands Rail Hub?

Midlands Rail Hub is a £1.75bn blueprint for faster, better and more frequent connections across the Midlands. The scheme will add up to 10 additional trains on the rail network per hour and provide faster, more frequent or new rail links for over 50 locations including: Leicester, Bromsgrove, Nuneaton, Worcester, Hereford and Cardiff.

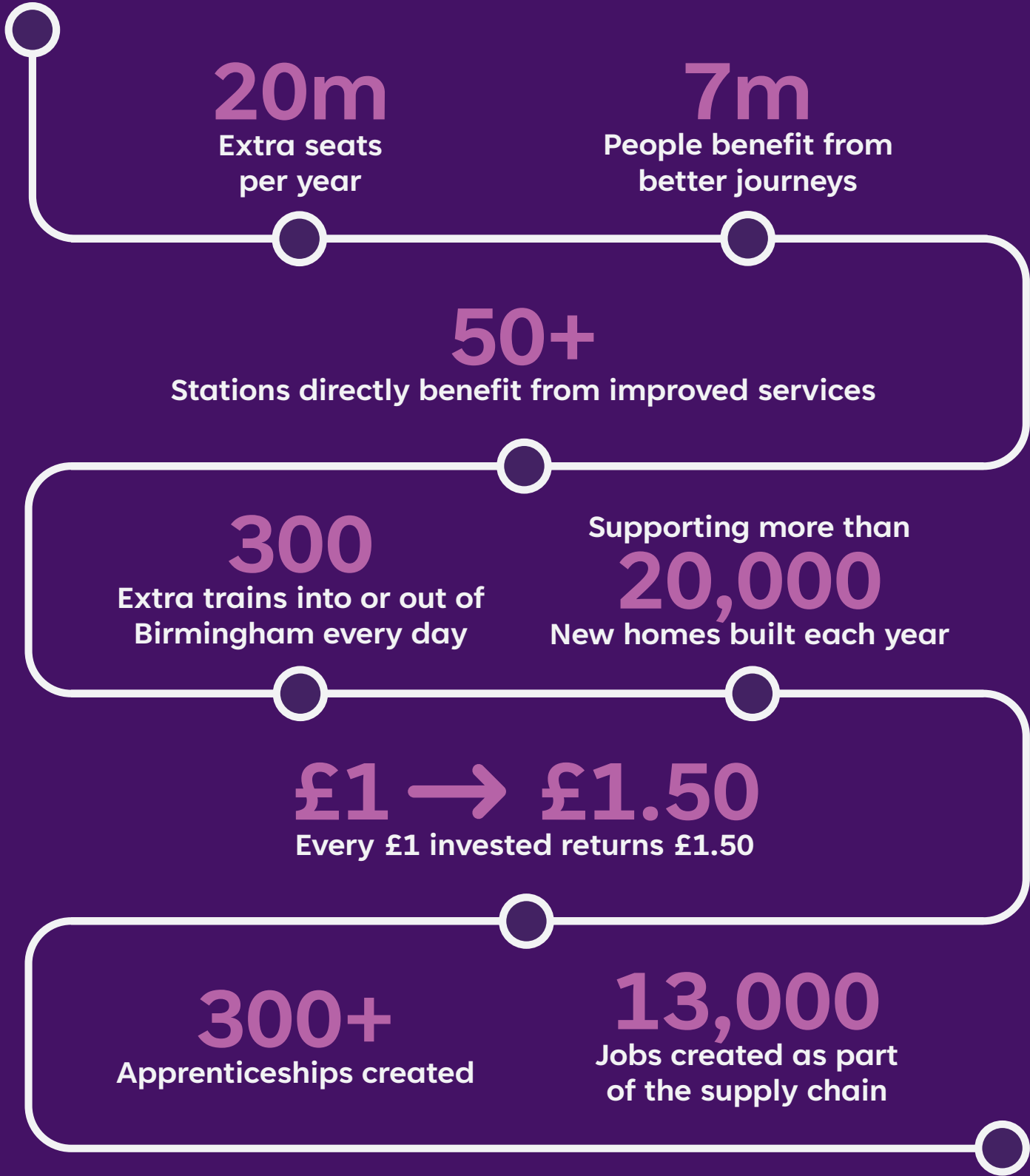
The Midlands Rail Hub proposes building two ‘chords’ as well as 10+ engineering interventions throughout the region – allowing us to offer up to 20 million extra seats for passengers and up to 300 extra trains every day, through the Midlands and beyond.

The West Chord: consists of improvements between Bordesley and Moor Street, allowing access to Birmingham Moor Street from South-West and Wales, and making sure services are improved on the Hereford and Worcester corridors.

The East Chord: creates an access to Birmingham Moor Street from the East Midlands.



Midlands Rail Hub at a glance



The benefits of Midlands Rail Hub

- **More rail journeys:** The scheme will add just under 20m seats on the rail network each year.
- **Shorter journey times:** For lines from Birmingham to places like Worcester, Cardiff and Hereford.
- **Boost economic growth:** For every pound we invest, we generate over £1.50 in benefits, inclusive of those to the wider economy.
- **Connecting East and West:** Aiming to double frequencies on key routes between the West and East Midlands.
- **Environmentally friendly:** Each parcel or person moved by rail instead of by diesel/ petrol vehicle creates 76% less CO2.
- **Safeguard jobs:** Maximise the benefits of HS2 and safeguard 1,600 jobs in the engineering and construction sector and create 12,750 jobs in the supply chain over the course of the project, including 300 apprenticeships.



Social mobility and transport exclusion in the Midlands

Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE) is defined as being unable to access opportunities, key services, and community life as much as needed, and facing major obstacles in everyday life through the wider impacts of having to travel to access key destinations.

These wider impacts include the cost and time entailed in using the transport system, alongside the impacts of stress and anxiety linked with using the transport system. Together, these can contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty, isolation, and poor access to basic services.

TRSE can have a significant impact upon the UK's economy - research from the Sutton Trust shows the financial cost of low social mobility in the UK can reach up to £140bn per year for the whole economy, representing a potential loss of 4% of the country's GDP.

A 2024 report by Demos, in partnership with Co-op, uncovered that greater social mobility could generate £6.8bn for Government in yearly tax revenues from additional economic activity – enough to pay for over 170,000 teachers or fund 884,000 school places.

The impact of TRSE

Midlands Connect has been working with fellow Sub-national Transport Body, Transport for the North, to better understand the challenges TRSE presents.

Our research shows that TRSE is most likely to impact people on low incomes, those with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and those with caring or childcare responsibilities. These aspects can limit the number of suitable transport options, which leads to an increased risk of TRSE.

With this data, we can identify communities where there is a high risk of TRSE and work with local authorities and Government, to develop recommendations that better connect these communities.

TRSE can be measured using the scoring methodology below.



Accessibility score

Analysis of access to jobs, education, health and basic services by all major transport modes

Output: Accessibility score for each area



Vulnerability score

Analysis of English Indices of Deprivation domain scores, transformed to link with accessibility

Output: Vulnerability score for each area



TRSE risk category

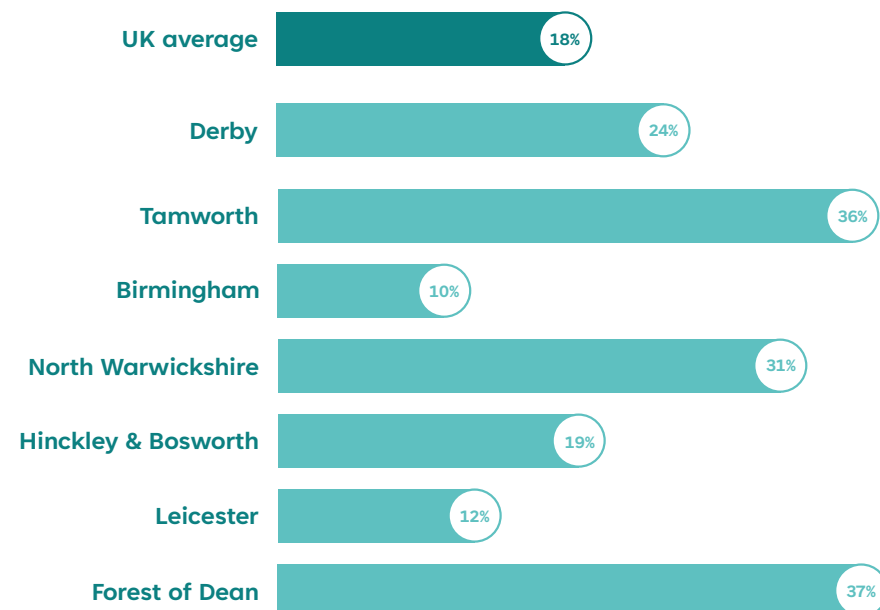
Analysis of vulnerability and accessibility deciles, identifying LSOAs scoring poorly in both

Output: 1-5 category for each area

Our findings

- 1 Nearly 400,000 people in the Midlands Rail Hub catchment area are at risk of social exclusion.
- 2 There are 8 districts in the catchment area that are 'high' to 'highest' risk areas. These are Derby, Tamworth, Birmingham, North Warwickshire, Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicester and Forest of Dean.
- 3 Cinderford West in the Forest of Dean is in the top 1 percentile of TRSE risk in the whole of England.
- 4 North Warwickshire and the Forest of Dean's social risk population is nearly double the English average.

% Transport related social exclusivity across the Midlands



Birmingham

In Birmingham, 118,211 (10.4%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE. The area ranks:

- Access challenges: 268 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 7 out of 296

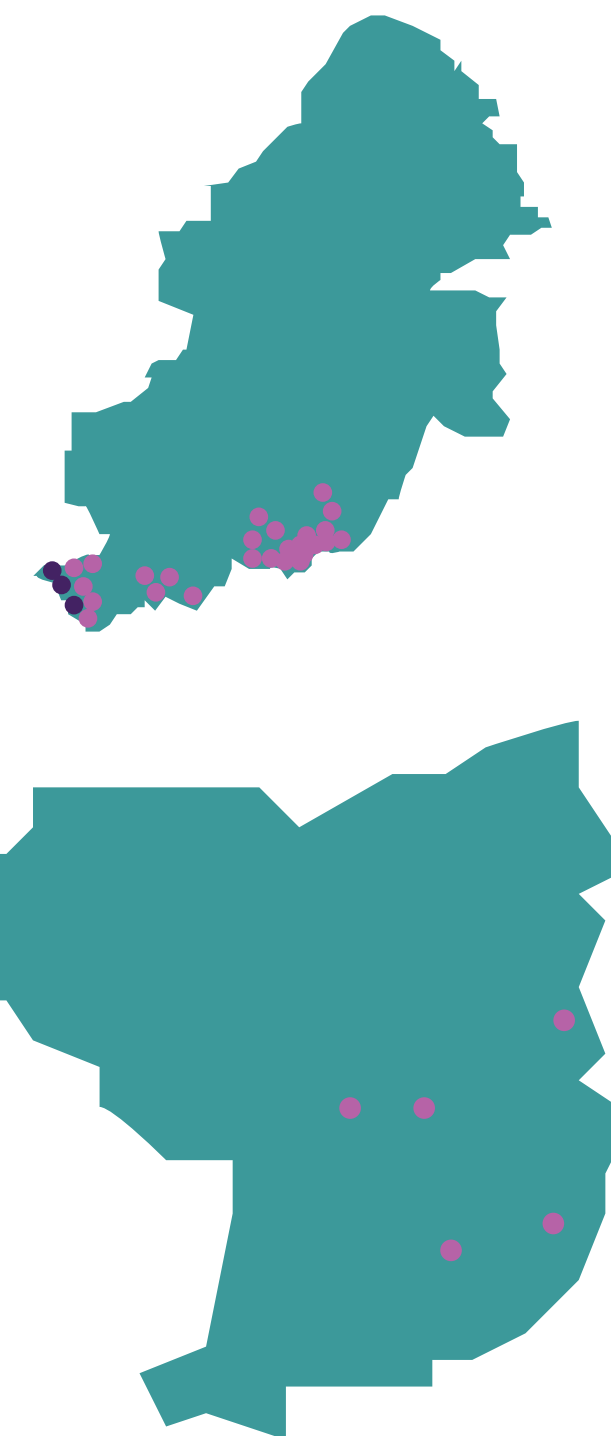
Frankley Great Park and Billesley wards are all in the top 10% 'at risk' wards in England. Specifically, Frankley Great Park, ranks 1,329 out of 32,844 areas nationally.

Tamworth

In Tamworth, 27,537 (35.9%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, 17.9% higher than the UK average. The area ranks:

- 48 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk
- Access challenges: 148 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 120 out of 296.

Amington, Glascote and Stonydelph wards are all in the top 7% 'at risk' wards in England.



Hinckley and Bosworth

In Hinckley and Bosworth, 21,312 (18.8%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE. The area ranks:

- 111 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk
- Access challenges: 107 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 214 out of 296

This neighbourhood of Hinckley and Bosworth is in National TRSE Risk Category 5, the highest risk. It ranks 471 out of 32,844 areas nationally, putting it in the highest 2% of England council wards.

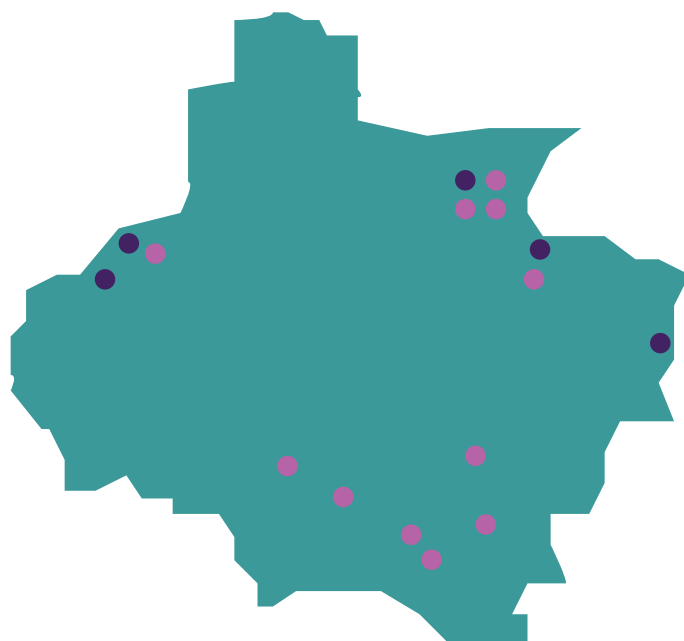
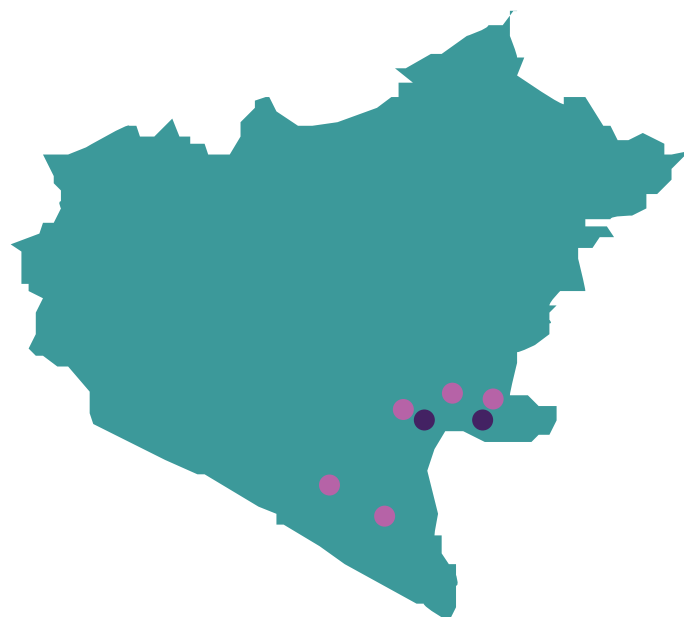
Barwell in particular is in National TRSE Risk Category 5, the highest risk category. It ranks 921 out of 32,844 areas nationally putting in the 3% of social mobility risk wards.

Derby

In Derby, 62,377 (24.2%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, 6.2% higher than the UK average. The area ranks:

- Access challenges: 200 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 58 out of 296

Chaddesden, Mackworth and Spondon wards are all in the top 3% 'at risk' wards in England.



North Warwickshire

In North Warwickshire, 20,476 (31.4%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, 13.4% higher than the UK average. The area ranks:

- 56 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk
- Access challenges: 93 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 163 out of 296

Atherstone South and Mancetter is in National TRSE Risk Category 5, the highest risk category, ranking 1,445 out of 32,844 areas nationally

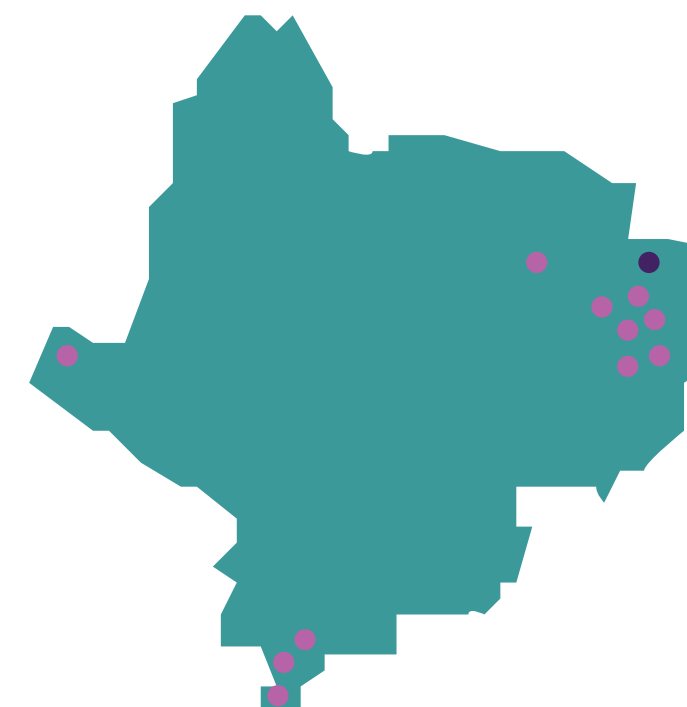
Leicester

In Leicester, 43,676 (12.3%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE. The area ranks:

- 159 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk
- Access challenges: 267 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 29 out of 296

Troon and Western are in National TRSE Risk Category 4, ranking 2,541 out of 32,844 areas and 2,641 out of 32,844 respectively.

Humberstone & Hamilton is in National TRSE Risk Category 5, the highest risk. It ranks 1,364 out of 32,844 areas nationally, putting it in the top 5% of social mobility risk wards.

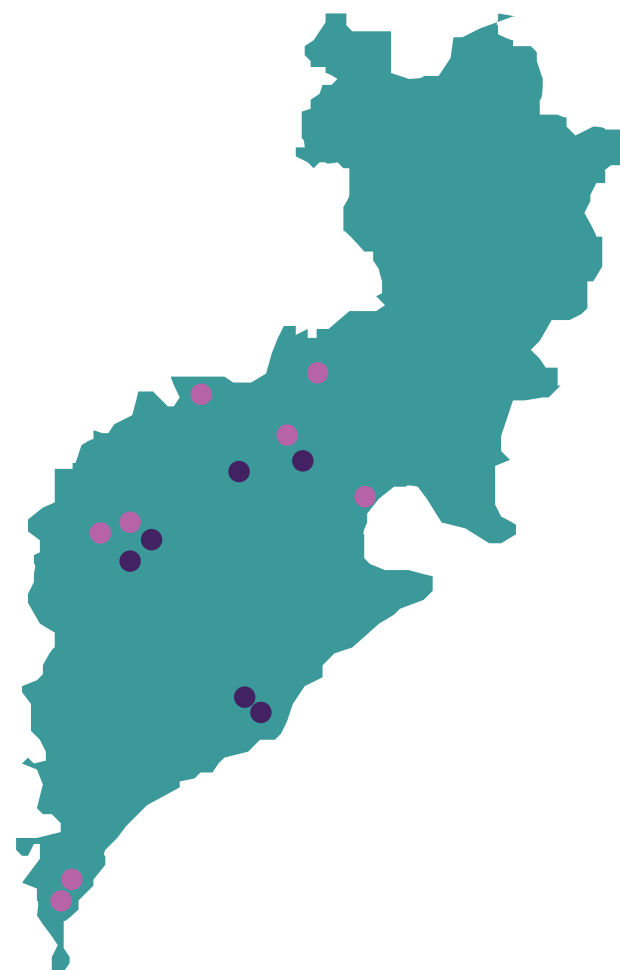


Forest of Dean

In Forest of Dean, 31,848 (36.7%) residents live in neighbourhoods with a nationally high risk of TRSE, 18.7% higher than the UK average. The area ranks:

- 46 out of 296 Local Authority Districts for the overall level of TRSE risk
- Access challenges: 11 out of 296
- Vulnerability challenges: 182 out of 296

Cinderford West is in National TRSE Risk Category 5, the highest risk. It ranks 85 out of 32,844 areas nationally. Lydney East is also in Category 5, ranking 398 out of 32,844 areas nationally.



Conclusion

Midlands Rail Hub is an essential railway upgrade which provides regional and national benefits. It better connects Britain by improving passenger journeys between towns and cities in the East and West Midlands, the South West, Wales and Scotland.

A catalyst for economic growth, it will create and improve access to jobs, will develop young people through tailored apprenticeship schemes, support much-needed house building and make train travel a greener first choice for millions of people.



