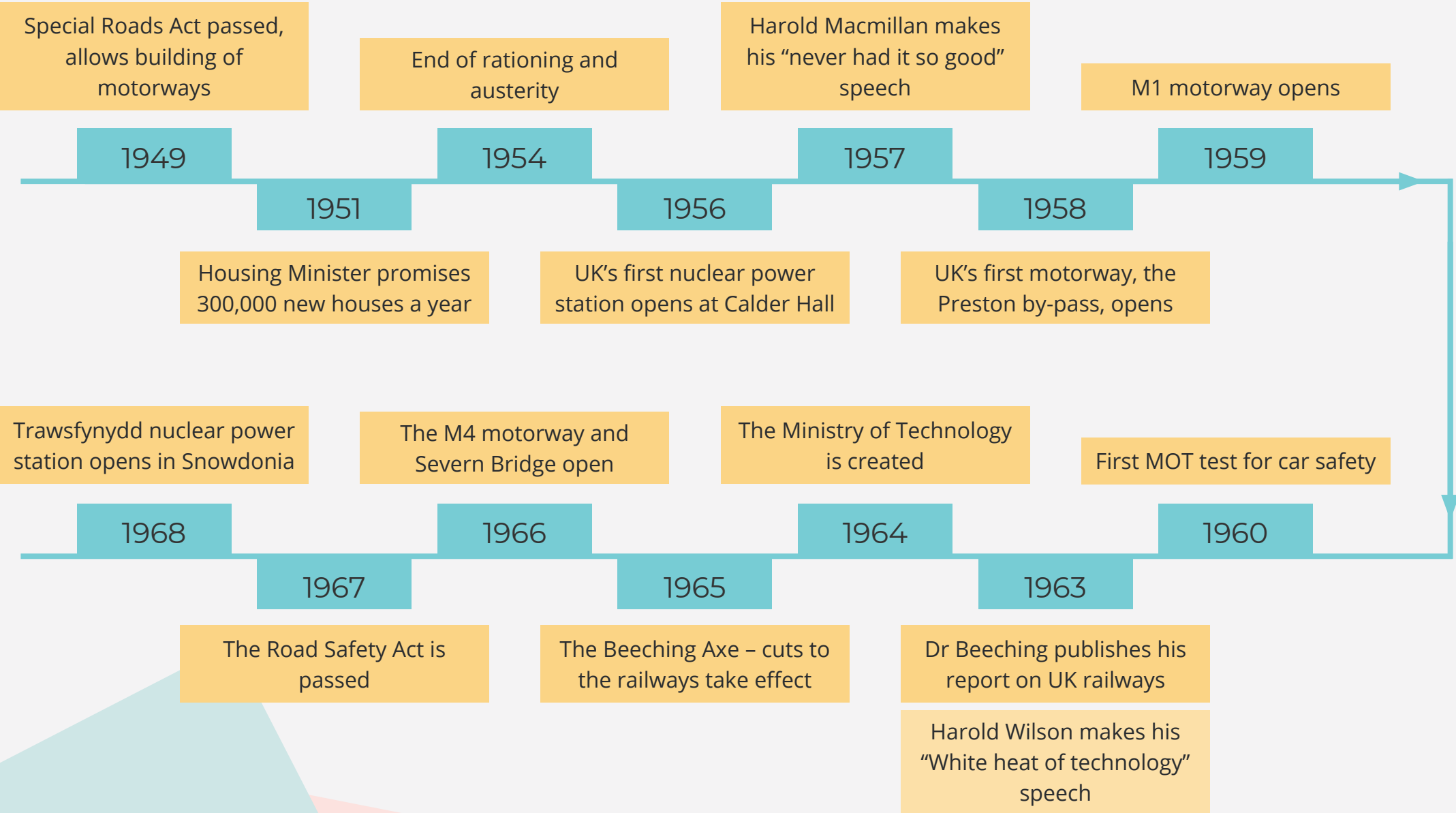


Key Question 2 : What factors contributed to the economic recovery in the 1950s and 1960s?

Timeline of events



Harold Macmillan, Conservative Prime Minister in 1957
"Most of our people have never had it so good"

Key words	
Consumerism	spending money on non-essential items
Labour-saving	devices to avoid time-consuming jobs
Income tax	a tax on the money people earn
Hire purchase	borrowing money to pay for an item now
Convenience food	food that is quick and easy to prepare
New town	modern towns with well-planned facilities
High-rise	blocks of flats and apartments
Beeching Axe	plan to cut expensive railways lines

Important concept
Affluence – people felt more confident about spending money, because there were lots of jobs both for men, women, even teenagers. Austerity was over so they spent more of the money they earned and were happy to borrow money to buy more.

Key Question 2 : What factors contributed to the economic recovery in the 1950s and 1960s?

Motorways

Car ownership greatly increased which led to an increase in road building – bypasses, ring roads, trunk roads and dual carriageways.

1949 Special Roads Act allowed the building of motorways for continuous movement of traffic at high speed.

December 1958 the Preston by-pass (now part of the M6) opened

The first stretch of the M1 (London to Leicester) opened in 1959. Motorways and new roads had a number of effects -

- people could drive to new supermarkets for a whole week's shopping
- more people commuted to work from suburbs and dormitory villages
- people could send their children to better schools further away
- increasing traffic congestion in towns
- MOT test was introduced in 1960 to ensure cars were safe to drive
- Road Safety Act 1967 introduced a maximum speed limit of 70mph.

The M4 links together south Wales and London, across the Severn Bridge.

Severn Bridge (opened September 1966) - tolls were collected at the English side. The journey from Wales to London was cut by two hours.

Housing and town planning

1. **New towns** – housing estates with their own shops, pubs and schools, pedestrian-friendly town shopping centre and industrial estates

CASE STUDY : Cwmbran - designed around five neighbourhoods, each of which had its own shops, pubs, parks and schools. It had a large pedestrianized covered shopping centre which opened in 1959 with spaces for 4,000 cars around it. In 1949 the population was 12,000. By 1971 it was 31,670.

2. **High-rise developments** ('streets in the sky') e.g. Trellick Tower in London and Park Hill in Sheffield, began to be built in towns. Cheap to build. Could house large numbers of people on less land. Better than slum housing but they declined quickly as lifts were vandalised and people stopped looking after the communal areas.

For all of the effort put into town planning in the 1950s and 1960s many people thought that not enough had been done to solve the UK's housing crisis.

Railways

By 1962 British Rail was losing £104 million a year. In 1961 Dr Richard Beeching, a businessman, was given the job of making British railways more efficient and published his report in 1963..

Minister for Transport Ernest Marples was more interested in road transport and wanted 'bustitution' – buses replacing train services.

Beeching found 33% of lines carried only 1% of the passengers, while 118 stations handled 52% of traffic.

The 1965 Beeching Axe closed a lot of lines and stations - 3,000 km (2000 miles) of track was dismantled, 160,000 jobs were lost.

Railways became fast containerised haulage and suburban commuter services

Rural communities became isolated and farmers were now forced to use roads for transport

The Beeching cuts reduced railways in Wales from 637 to 363 miles, and railway stations from 538 to 184. To travel from north to south Wales by rail you had to go through Shrewsbury or London, which were in England.

Consumerism

Why was there growing affluence in the 1950s and 1960s?

- the end of rationing and austerity in 1954
- reduced working hours - more leisure time
- wage rises (130% in the 1950s and 1960s) because of full employment
- tax cuts - income tax fell by 5% in the 1950s.

How did consumerism change the lives of people in the UK?

- Consumerism is spending money on non-essential or luxury items rather than on essentials e.g. televisions, refrigerators, music systems and cars.
- The consumer cycle = people buy more products – businesses make more profit – businesses pay higher wages – workers have more money to spend – people buy more products, etc.
- Consumer spending increased by 115% in the 1950s.

The rising number of houses boosted consumer demand for:

- labour-saving devices, like washing machines
- entertainment items, such as televisions, radios and record players
- refrigerators so daily shopping was no longer necessary.