

# Transport Planning Society

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Thursday 24 May 2018**

### **Chair's Report**

Today is the first time I have attended a TPS AGM and also my first as Chair, a daunting task particularly given my predecessors. Before starting on writing this report I read John Dales's report to the last AGM and discovered that unbeknown to me I had been thrown a gauntlet! My first year has been one of many "gauntlets" too many to mention and I know there are more to come! I want to therefore focus on a few of them and what we are doing, particularly focusing on the future more than the past.

My first challenge was just getting to grips with the Board and the organisation having come from the "outside". My thanks must go to John, members of the Board and Kath Coldwell for all the support and advice I have received. With their support we have begun to tackle some of the key challenges I was handed in April and that are facing the TPS. The climate that transport planning is working within remains tough. It remains a major challenge for the Society and for society at large to persuade decision makers that securing really sustainable development requires new ways of thinking and acting and transport is a critical part of that. Our ability to affect the way transport planning is perceived and delivered by society at large – as I highlighted last year in my report to the AGM – is heavily constrained. We still have a lot to do to enable us to ensure or support delivery of really "sustainable places".

In this context therefore the Society has focused on four key objectives that it set out last year. The first of them is to raise our profile and influence at central government level as well as local level. This will be key to securing sustainable transport as an integral part of creating places where people want to live and work. The NPPF sets out a requirement to deliver sustainable development – all the current evidence suggests that we are not doing so and frequently creating less sustainable places. The TPS has therefore been engaging with Government trying to influence the forthcoming revision of the NPPF. Time will tell over the next few months if we have been successful.

I see my role as Chair to focus on a few key actions of which the profile with Government is one. So during this year we are increasing our efforts in that direction. A key action to raise our profile is the launch of Transport Planning Day towards the end of this year. This was a "gauntlet" I was handed at the Transport Practitioners' Meeting in July last year by a TPS member. We are currently actively planning for it and a series of activities leading up to it. I hope that ALL members, individual, stakeholder or corporate will become actively involved as it is a key way not only to raise our profile, but improve understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing us and increase membership. Watch this space!

Like all aspects of our work we are seeking to build alliances, working collaboratively not only with our sponsoring institutes but also other relevant organisations. The broader the base from which we move forward the more impact we can hopefully have. For Transport Planning Day we want to engage not only with the profession but also the wider community whom we serve.

Another key strand of our work is supporting our members whether it is through our events on current issues or the qualifications. We had a wide range of events last year in both the regions and our events are part of our knowledge transfer process. This year we will be seeking to maintain or enhance the programme particularly focusing on raising the profile of transport planning and its contribution to society. I would ask all of you here today to become involved in participating in these events whether speaking or attending.

At some events last year we focused on the “principles” of transport planning as relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We also asked all members through our annual survey. This work is now coming to its conclusion and we will be sharing the outcomes with all members and a wider audience at events like the TPM in Oxford. These principles are vital to the profession and should underpin all our education and training as well as our practices. We will therefore be looking at their relationship with the TPP and PDS in the forthcoming year. This year should also see a major improvement in the TPP qualification so again “watch this space”. Improvements have already been made to the PDS process and we will continue to ensure that all the qualifications are fit for purpose as the world around us changes. Dealing with uncertainty and therefore requiring flexibility are key challenges for the profession requiring particular skills.

Many people are currently undertaking our qualifications which is excellent and bodes well for the future. Approximately 190-200 people are currently pursuing the TPP and over 400 on the PDS route.

Our members are critical to our profile, the actions we can take and our finances. The more members we have the stronger our voice nationally and locally. Since April 2017 individual membership has grown from 1159 to 1341 but we need more! The more people who are transport planners at all levels and in all organisations across the country the greater potential impact on what is done to achieve positive outcomes. We need members both at senior as well as junior level in both the public and private sector who can affect change.

Our stakeholder membership of around 36 is basically static but this is notwithstanding many changes in the market place resulting particularly from mergers. We are looking at how we can further support the membership.

So to conclude. As a Society we have a major opportunity to influence the way that places function for the better but to do so we need to tackle just a few obstacles! We need to convince politicians, the public and professionals about the need for a change in approach. We need more effective tools and to make better use of those we have. The scale of growth and change facing this country is significant. Unless we approach transport differently society may hold us responsible for many of the problems that will be created if we carry on approaching the future as we have in the past. It is time to change.