

Moves in a new direction

In this section we gather together some of the ideas from the Manifesto process. Some could be implemented very quickly, some would need to go through a process which could take several years, but are possible within a Parliament. We have deliberately chosen topics which offer major benefits, although the ease of implementation varies and several measures could be progressed within each topic.

The working list is set out below and the first two topics have been drafted for comment and are set out below.

- 1) ***Linking up with land use planning: new transport and planning guidance and combined powers***
- 2) ***New governance and funding: combined authorities, Highways England and beyond – fewer competitions and more consistency and integration***
- 3) ***Transport and Health: recognising the importance of transport and active travel, but including disbenefits of inactive travel***
- 4) ***New approach to appraisal: a realistic approach to economic, health and social benefits and no double counting!***
- 5) ***Opening up transport forecasting: recognising the value of demand management, engaging with the profession to understand changes in demand on a whole journey basis***
- 6) ***Intelligent motoring: see TPS submission on Motoring of the Future, and how can we support car use where needed***
- 7) ***Lorry Road User Charging: achievable in a Parliament and a game changer for demand management?***
- 8) ***Demand management by price: national user charging may not be achievable but parking is an obvious alternative – what is the long term plan to replace fuel duty?***
- 9) ***Travel behaviour change: can this be reinstated in national forecasting and funding and in the planning system at local level?***
- 10) ***Promoting non-motorised travel: there is a need to understand differences between walking (which has many non-travel benefits) and cycling, nevertheless the creation of active travel through these modes has many benefits***
- 11) ***Major infrastructure investment: air, rail and road: how do we know where and how much to build if we haven't implemented demand management yet?***
- 12) ***Local rail capacity: a high priority for TPS members even though they are generally not rail specialists – why are there so few rapid transit systems in British cities?***

1 Linking up with land use planning: new transport and planning guidance

Government has been trying to simplify planning guidance but this has often taken the form of scrapping it. The shorter replacement, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is generalised and open to different interpretations. Our submission on the draft NPPF (together with many others) suggested amendments which would have achieved clarity without making it any longer. However, only minor modifications were made. The lack of effective controls over the transport impact of new development (and re-development) is storing up problems for the future and failing to address the congestion of today.

By contrast, the package of policies often called Smart Growth, which began in the US, sets out an agenda for planning and transport to support and encourage development while at the same time reducing the need to travel and generating economic benefits. The latter include “agglomeration” which is basically the grouping together of businesses and support services within walking distance of each other. This encourages higher density centres which need to be served by high capacity rapid transit links¹. To an extent this is in opposition to the lower density “garden city” approach.

For transport planners the idea that the scale of development should be limited by the accessibility of a site by sustainable modes is not new. In fact the last decade has seen the development, with the support of the DfT, of easy to use software² to show how accessible sites are. Combined with land use information this could be incorporated into simple guidance which would be the true successor to the maximum limits set in the old PPG13. TPS suggested accessibility based planning as a replacement for parking limits in a recent policy response³. The implications of this must, however, be made clear. Sites with lower levels of sustainable accessibility (which includes population within walking distance) must have very much lower levels of development (and not higher levels of car parking provision). Proposals which exceed the limit would be permissible if the site can be made more accessible, and funded proposals to do this should be within the planning proposal. This links back to the proposal for transit led development.

In addition, the relative accessibility of different sites, and changes in accessibility caused by, for example, creating bigger but fewer facilities for health, leisure and business, should also be part of the planning process. Such an approach would finally bring together the land use and transport criteria in any application. It is over 20 years since the then DoE undertook research to show how effective this approach could be.

In practice, the criteria are more likely to be met on brownfield sites (supporting regeneration), and next to railway stations or rapid transit stops. Such sites are often favoured in policy statements, but less so by developers due to unrealistically low greenfield costs. This approach would work with the market to make development more sustainable. Planners could then be more pro-active in promoting public transport or higher density settlements associated with employment, education, and other facilities. In one of the Manifesto seminars a local authority elected representative said *“all we do now is choose between a number of unsuitable fields and hope to avoid the worst”*. He also said that in his area there were several possible locations to create a new station on an existing railway line which could serve, and be financed by, new housing. It is interesting that this would have implications for transport governance and the relationship between local authorities, Network Rail and the operating companies.

¹ Often called TOD or Transit Oriented Development

² Accession (now Visography TRACC)

³ TPS submission to DCLG on parking controls and the planning system

Such examples mean that opportunities to create genuinely sustainable development (as the NPPF says is its main aim) are being lost. New guidance could promote not only growth in terms of development, but also in the sustainable transport networks which are needed to maintain it. The other key to achieving greater co-ordination between transport and land use planning is to ensure they are conducted in new governance framework. This is the next area of action for this Manifesto.

2 *New governance and funding*

There are three key areas where TPS members have called for change⁴. The first is support for a roll out of a model for transport and land use planning more akin to the London arrangements (although a Mayor is probably not a necessary condition). This would begin with the major conurbations, but not confined to the old Metropolitan areas. For example, places such as Bristol, Stoke, Nottingham, Leicester, Teeside, Coventry, Brighton and Hove, Bournemouth and Poole all have significant populations and transport planning needs. Of course their state of readiness and willingness will vary, but in principle some of these areas could be set on the path to integrated city provision in the next Parliament and some would be capable of achieving it.

In this sense the development of Combined Authorities for transport, economic, and possibly spatial planning is moving towards this goal, and creating bodies which will be more coherent and democratic than LEAs. This is not just happening in urban areas like Manchester, Birmingham and Teeside, proposals for an Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire authority have been published by the three counties⁵.

This focus on self governance would in itself create the scale needed to recruit and develop transport skills. It is a common misunderstanding that the outsourcing of local authority functions, including transport provision and even transport planning, requires the maintenance of internal expertise to maintain the role of an “intelligent client”. Without this, the value for money of tenders to undertake such services cannot be assessed, and the preparation of the tenders themselves may be flawed. Tender outcomes also need to be monitored to ensure value for money and this again requires in-house understanding of transport – as one TPS member put it “*it’s not the same as ordering paper clips*”. This is critical to the efficient functioning of local authorities in their transport role.

One key requirement is for the areas of responsibility to be defined, and for some clear criteria to be set out. In transport terms, the functioning of a larger urban area requires a travel catchment beyond its immediate boundaries. It is possible to define this and then to give clear powers to harmonise, for example, parking standards between centres and off centre sites. TPS has also suggested the use of sustainable transport access mapping to guide development across boundaries, as set out above. In this sense the governance proposals would support the integration between land use and transport planning which we consider essential.

We suggest that new transport authorities need to emerge, first from the cities and other conurbations, either as combined authorities or as city authorities where this is a problem. Both would have wider powers outside their boundaries, both in terms of larger scale land use planning permissions and in extending transport networks to fulfil the needs of their wider catchment areas. One of the TPS 2015 Bursary research papers⁶ showed how many different local authorities

⁴ TPS Members 2014 survey

⁵ See *Public Finance*, 17th December 2014, *Local Transport Today*, 5th February 2015

⁶ *Space and Flow: How can the Government better link Land Use and Transport Planning?* Ward Alsafi, TPS Bursary report, January 2015

operated within the ONS defined travel to work areas (TTWA)⁷ catchment areas for the journey to work. Of the 197 TTWAs in England and Wales, 9% have more than 11 local authorities working on relevant planning and transport issues within them, just over 40% have between 6 and 10 (all of them in England) and a similar number between 2 and 5.

This analysis is confirmed by the complexity of powers and responsibilities, and the many different routes for funding local transport. Many of these, particularly for sustainable transport, have been on the basis of competitive bidding for short term (2-3 year) funding. This has caused problems including:

- High cost overhead for preparing bids: complexity of related bids and match funding
- Some bids for revenue or capital only where most projects need a proportion of both
- Outcomes not designed to be “mainstreamed” – spending and staff kept separate from ongoing expenditure.

The 2012 Audit Commission report⁸ found the position for transport expenditure very complex (without taking into account powers such as parking and planning) with 33% of transport spending in Metropolitan areas, 42% in two tier authority areas, and 25% in unitaries. Only the latter had powers which potentially allowed transport and land use planning to be co-ordinated. The position has in fact become more complex since then, especially with the emergence of LEPs.

A final interesting move has been the agreement of “city deals” which are essentially bids for funding over a longer period and usually have a strong transport element. These are longer term, and use what may well be the precursors of new centres of governance. For example major support has been agreed for the “Sheffield City Region” including £500million for transport over 10 years. This is actually led by the LEP, but a combined authority is being created which will take it on in future. Outside the Metropolitan areas, the Greater Cambridge Region (city, district and county councils) has been promised £186million over 5 years with further funding in the next 5. A new “City Deal Assembly” has been formed since there is no agreement for a combined authority, although the County will have to lead on much of the capital investment, which is dominated by bus priority.

There are three key areas where improvement is needed:

1. A compatible approach to large scale capital spending, where the argument for greater longer term consistency seems to have gained ground, and smaller scale spending, usually on sustainable transport and often with higher revenue content.
2. Much greater coherence between transport and land use planning, both through national guidance, and at local level, either through new and binding duties to co-operate across authority boundaries to comply with that guidance, or the creation of combined authorities at least for these functions.
3. Without a new “top down” total reform of local government, the evolution of a simpler and accountable structure for transport spending, across capital and revenue, building on the emerging combined authorities and city deal arrangements but ensuring the inclusion of sustainable transport at its core.

As we have recommended elsewhere⁹ this approach should be reflected nationally by the creation of a unified Ministerial responsibility for spatial planning.

⁷ See Office for National Statistics TTWA, currently based on 2001 Census, 2011 data due 2015

⁸ *Funding for local transport: an overview*, NAO, October 2012

⁹ See the 20 year strategy: *A Vision for Transport Planning*, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) and the Transport Planning Society (TPS), October 2014