

State of the Nations Update: Transport Planning for a Sustainable Future

November 2022

Foreword



Mark Frost
Chair
Transport Planning Society

I'm delighted to be able to present this comprehensive update to the Society's landmark 2020 State of the Nations report, exploring the current state of the art in transport planning in the UK.

The work brings together what we now know about the potential impacts of the pandemic on travel demand across the country. It also serves as a record of the responses that our different governments made to this unprecedented shock to the system. The effective end of rail franchising; the establishment of Active Travel England and demands that local government reallocate road space "at pace"; the publishing of 'Bus Back better' – the list goes on. It's quite incredible and somewhat sobering to take a step back and just remind ourselves of the huge breadth of what's happened across the sector in just twenty four short months.

Whilst we are obviously in a much better place to start to understand the possible structural changes impacting on transport planning than we were in 2020, it is clear that much uncertainty still exists.

Uncertainty is typically considered the planner's mortal enemy. However, this work makes clear that we need to shift that mindset, and accept that the future was always more uncertain, imprecise and ultimately influenceable than our models and forecasts sometimes suggested.

Instead of developing our schemes to largely meet the needs of yesterday, the last two years have shown us that

we now need to think far more about what we want our transport network to look like if it is to be fit for purpose for tomorrow.

Reviewing the increasingly diverging practice across the nations of the UK to this issue can be a useful lens to apply here. England is now looking much more like an outlier in not considering formal targets for mileage reduction, with Wales and Scotland in particular forging ahead with an ambitious agenda to soften the impact of vehicles on our towns and cities. The embedding of scenario planning in decision making is considered a key tool in delivering on these objectives.

These approaches from devolved administrations seem far more in line with what we know the sector needs to do to rise to the challenge of the climate emergency – the one area where there is no uncertainty remaining about the need to act.

A business-as-usual approach is simply not tenable if our sector is to play its full part in delivering on the UK's decarbonisation targets. A fundamental rethink is required of how resources are allocated across the sector to ensure we are all pulling in the same direction at the pace required. Adopting the best practices from different parts of the UK would assist in this regard, and the Society is delighted we're in a position to help summarise, disseminate and provoke discussion on those.

I would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work on the report, my colleagues on the TPS Board and Steering Group, and the team at the University of Hertfordshire. A big thank you also to all our TPS individual and stakeholder members who make all this possible. Please do engage with the report and let us know any feedback or thoughts you have on its content and recommendations - alongside any ideas for areas for focus for the next of these reviews.

TPS STEERING GROUP

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Introduction

In 2020, The Transport Planning Society commissioned the University of Hertfordshire’s Smart Mobility Unit to produce a survey of the state of transport and of transport planning in Britain. The resulting “State of the Nations” report, published in October 2020, looked at trends in travel patterns, at the benefits but also the costs of those trends on society and the environment, and at the impacts of transport policies and public spending priorities in England, Scotland and Wales. The report was well received by parliamentarians and decision-makers and its recommendations were widely covered in the transport world.

The report was produced in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its survey of transport patterns necessarily reflected the pre-pandemic situation, though it noted that there were potentially big changes under way as a result of the pandemic. Since then, there have been studies and surveys on the effect of the pandemic on travel, including the growth in home working, allowing a more considered view of the likely changes in travel.

As well as this, since the “State of the Nations” report was published there have been some major policy documents produced by Governments across the UK about aspects of transport policy. The COP26 Glasgow conference on climate change in November 2021 was the occasion for various initiatives to decarbonise transport, and in the run up to it the UK Government produced a Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which included a number of far-reaching proposals. This and the general increased awareness of the urgency of reducing carbon and other emissions contributing to global heating, with a series of extreme weather events, has had an increasing impact on transport policy across the four UK nations. The war in Ukraine has, with other factors, led to increased inflation and pressures on household budgets, which is posing further challenges for transport policy.

The Transport Planning Society therefore decided that an update to the 2020 report would be worthwhile, and has commissioned the University of Hertfordshire to revisit its original report and set out the changes that have occurred since then. The report comes at a time of significant challenges for UK society in general, and UK transport in particular, and it is hoped this report will be as useful as the original was in drawing together what is happening in transport across the UK and that the updated recommendations will be helpful to policy-makers.

Executive summary, conclusions and recommendations

This report is an update of the “State of the Nations” report, produced by the University of Hertfordshire for the Transport Planning Society, and published in October 2020. That report looked at the state of transport, and transport planning, in England, Scotland and Wales. It made a number of recommendations on future policy, practice and governance of transport in the UK.

However, that report was prepared when the Covid pandemic had led to restrictions on travel and other activities and this had deeply affected travel patterns. This update has been able to survey what has happened since to travel, and to look at what the four Governments and local authorities in the UK (this time including Northern Ireland are doing on transport.

Travel patterns have still not returned to the way they were before Covid, and may never do so

Although travel by all modes has increased after the end of Covid lockdowns, they are different from the pre-Covid situation. Car travel is still below pre-Covid levels during the week, though van and lorry traffic is now higher than before Covid. Public transport use is also still below pre-Covid levels, though has been steadily increasing. Cycling and walking have also increased (our previous report found that walking accounted for a large proportion of local travel and is now higher than ever). This is however a **leisure-led recovery**; travel by all modes is at or above pre-Covid levels at weekends, while commuting and business travel during the week are still down.

Some of these changes seem likely to last, especially with increased homeworking, online business meetings and the continuing expansion of online shopping. The increased squeeze on household incomes is also

influencing travel demand. Travel also varies hugely by income, gender and age groups, and where people live. Understanding travel patterns, identifying the different kinds of journeys made by different groups in society, and ensuring these differences are fully reflected in transport planning, is even more essential now.

Governments responded to the changes in travel during Covid in various ways, in particular supporting active travel and public transport. However, the current economic crisis is leading to new and very large challenges, especially to public transport where there is a risk of new “transport deserts”

All the UK Governments have provided support for active travel and the UK Government has set up “Active Travel England” to raise standards and distribute funding. Scotland and Northern Ireland have committed to spend 10% of transport funding on active travel and Wales has legislated to make 20 mph the default speed limit in built up areas.

The new emphasis on and support and funding for active travel is welcomed by transport planners. In general provision for more walking and cycling is popular and Governments should carry on supporting it. It has significant benefits in terms of local economic vitality, social inclusion, public health and transport emissions. **Active travel should be mainstreamed in all transport programmes, notably on the management of and investment in major roads, backed by up to date design guidelines and other technical documents. However, design for active travel schemes needs to be genuinely inclusive, and consultation and engagement on proposed active travel schemes needs to be robust and comprehensive.**

All the UK governments provided significant support to public transport during the pandemic and have committed to major investment in public transport systems, but the economic crisis, with increased costs and reduced ridership and revenue for public transport compared to the pre-Covid era, poses a huge challenge for transport planners and policy-makers. The difficulties faced by Transport for London and other city transport authorities demonstrate that previous business models and the traditional UK Government approach, described in our 2020 report as “users paying most or all of the costs of the transport services”, will need to be revisited.

The crisis in public transport raises big social issues. Without more and continued Government support, there will be an increase in “transport deserts”, which will leave more people and communities isolated and add to social exclusion, isolation, loneliness and mental health problems.

In addition, high quality and affordable public transport services are needed to reduce road congestion and are more necessary now than ever to tackle air pollution and climate change.

Other countries recognise these wider impacts and are funding their public transport accordingly. The UK Government should do the same rather than seek to cut funding and services and raise fares - doing so will create a vicious spiral of decline and add to social and environmental problems.

Long term, enhanced and devolved funding settlements for transport authorities (including London) and for devolved administrations will support the economy and help people and communities; continued investment in new and upgraded public transport and in active travel will help sustain and create jobs and contribute to decarbonisation and tackling social exclusion. Transport planners will need to be vocal in making these points, given the prevailing pressures on day-to-day revenue funding.

Transport policy-makers need to do more to decarbonise and to tackle the cost of living crisis

Our 2020 report noted the benefits of car ownership and the independent mobility cars have brought, but also the downsides of the dominance of private motor vehicles. These include air pollution, deaths and injuries from road crashes, and congestion and community impacts from high traffic levels and highway infrastructure. This update focuses on two other challenges facing transport planning in the UK: climate change and social exclusion/cost of living.

On **climate change**, where the transport sector is responsible for over a quarter of UK carbon emissions, the update finds some progress, but also more to do. The UK Government has produced a Transport Decarbonisation Plan, with targets for phasing out fossil fuel engines for all surface transport and also measures and ambitions to change travel behaviour. However, there are no targets to reduce road traffic levels and motor vehicle use. Scotland and Wales, and some cities, have set such targets. **The Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the ambitions within it are very welcome but need to underpinned by clear targets and measures to reduce vehicle mileage in England. The ambitions in the plan – for example to reduce urban road traffic and to increase vehicle occupancy – should therefore be turned into quantified targets and clear strategies, to make them a reality.**

The strategies to tackle carbon emissions from transport in Wales and Scotland are very welcome. A Northern Ireland strategy to tackle carbon emissions from transport should be developed by the relevant departments and should include targets for reducing vehicle mileage, akin to those in Wales and Scotland.

Decarbonising transport should be the foundation of transport appraisal, but in practice the way in which transport projects are assessed tend to downplay the importance of reducing carbon emissions or trade them off against other factors like time savings by transport users.

The Department for Transport and the devolved Governments should revisit the treatment of greenhouse gas emissions in transport appraisal, and test policies, schemes and interventions against their contributions to the pathways for reducing carbon emissions. Local transport authorities should similarly assess their transport policies, strategies and spending against their targets for reducing carbon emissions from transport.

On the cost of living crisis, our 2020 report noted that the dependence on car travel in the transport system contributes to poverty and social exclusion and recent sharp rises in fuel costs and public transport fares have contributed to the cost of living pressures UK households are facing. The cost of public transport as well as of private car use needs to be addressed. While other countries have reduced fuel duties, many have also reduced public transport fares, some quite significantly, and some places are making local public transport completely free. In the UK, the Government has announced a £2 daily cap on bus fares; Northern Ireland has frozen public transport fares and the Scottish Government is freezing rail fares until next March.

However, there is a case for longer term fares reductions; **the Governments in the UK should consider further measures to reduce local public transport fares nationally, following the initiatives in other countries. They should reduce or at least freeze rail fares in 2023. They should evaluate the results of the fares reductions in Cornwall and elsewhere and support places that want to follow this lead.**

But fares levels are only part of the issue. **In the light of the cost of living crisis, UK Governments should review their transport and other policies and spending so as to tackle car dependence and transport related social exclusion for different groups in society. This should encompass the affordability, accessibility and availability of public transport, less car-based land use planning, and further support for active travel and shared transport. Schemes, projects and measures in transport should be designed to reduce car dependence and transport-related social exclusion, and those that increase it should not go ahead. This should be supported by the re-definition of the overarching goal of national transport policy to be to “increase equitable and sustainable access to goods, services, opportunities and other people”.**

There are increasing differences between the four Governments in the UK in their approach to transport policy

This divergence can be seen in three main areas:

1 Roads policy and transport funding: The UK Government is continuing a large scale road building programme in England. By contrast, the Welsh Government has instituted an independent review of its inherited roads programme, the Scottish Government is increasingly emphasising local transport and active travel in its transport investment programme and the Northern Ireland government has signalled greater emphasis on maintaining existing roads, rather than expanding them. **Given the economic and social costs of poor maintenance, greater priority in roads and transport spending should be given to maintaining existing roads, bridges and pavements, including local authority roads, and increasing their resilience to extreme weather events, as against major new road projects. The move by the Welsh Government to formally review its inherited roads programme should be followed by the other UK nations, so as to ensure their transport investment supports rather than undermines their decarbonisation plans and supports biodiversity. In particular,**

the next Road Investment Strategy in England should be reframed and the management of the strategic road network recast to focus on optimisation rather than expansion, so as to support national, regional and local commitments to decarbonise transport. The revised National Policy Statement for National Networks, promised in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, should actively promote schemes that reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity.

2 Planning policy: Current spatial planning in England, especially with new housing, tends to embed car dependence. The system at present is focused on numbers of new houses, with limited or no linkage to transport planning and the current National Planning Policy Framework, making it difficult to refuse new development on transport grounds. By contrast, the policies and strategies in the other three UK nations have in the last two years integrated transport and spatial planning more closely. New planning policies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland aim to focus new development around public transport and existing town centres. **The moves to integrate transport and spatial planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are welcome, but need to be followed through, monitored and evaluated. In England, planning reform needs to encompass a revised National Planning Policy Framework and give priority to development built around existing or new public transport, with good local facilities and services that can be reached easily on foot or bike. The moves to “15/20 minute neighbourhoods” are welcome but the concept and framework needs to be clearly defined. The role of Active Travel England as a statutory consultee in the English planning system is very welcome; the new Great British Railways body, when established, should be given a similar status and role. Planning policy should also ensure that new bus facilities and services are properly planned for as part of new developments.**

3 Public transport operations: there is a general recognition that bus deregulation in the 1980s and rail privatisation in the 1990s went too far. In England, the franchising of bus services on the London model has been made easier and the Mayor of Greater Manchester has now won the right to do this, starting in 2023; other mayors are following suit and the Government is promoting “enhanced partnerships” between councils and operators elsewhere. The Government’s rail reforms propose a new strategic body, Great British Railways, which will let contracts for passenger rail services and do more strategic planning.

However, Wales and Scotland have gone further. Both governments have taken the rail operators there into public ownership and are allowing local authorities to run their own bus services; Scotland is enabling bus franchising and partnerships and the Welsh Government is planning to move towards franchising of all bus services in Wales. In Northern Ireland nearly all public transport is publicly owned and run by Translink. **The moves towards giving transport authorities more powers over bus services and towards better planning for public transport and the new Great British Railways are welcome. However, given the intense economic problems facing public transport outlined above, the powers should be accompanied by more funding for bus services and by support for authorities giving priority to buses and linking buses and trains to new developments.**

Cutting traffic: towards a national transport strategy: These divergences in transport policy are reflected in overarching policy. Wales and Scotland have national transport strategies, but there is no national transport strategy for England or for the UK as a whole. **The UK Government should develop a national transport strategy, drawing together its various strategies and policies, and including quantified targets to support the ambitions in its plans and policies such as the Decarbonisation Plan, including reductions in vehicle mileage in England. The overarching goal of this strategy should be to increase equitable and sustainable access to goods, services, opportunities and other people; it should be linked to spatial planning, including a revised National Planning Policy Framework and should support the new generation of Local Transport Plans.**

The devolved administration and many local authorities are showing that there are ways to reduce car mileage, including in areas outside cities. Apart from better and more affordable public transport, there are new mobility options (bike share, e-scooters, car clubs, demand-responsive buses etc) and increased car sharing, especially for journeys to work, can reduce car mileage and save commuters money. However, measures to manage traffic and parking will be needed as part of packages to reduce carbon emissions and congestion and improve air quality, though these can be controversial. **Governments should support local authorities and communities in taking action to reduce traffic and to decarbonise transport. They should require local authorities to produce local transport plans, linked to local development plans, and with quantified carbon reduction pathways at their heart, and fund them accordingly. Governments should actively fund pilots in different**

types of communities and spread information on these. Councils in England should make use of the new decriminalised traffic enforcement powers to develop smarter traffic management measures that help reduce road danger and support decarbonisation.

Funding for transport should be simplified and transport taxation reformed

There is a complex range of funding sources for transport and many require bids from councils, which are time-consuming. **The Government should heed the advice from the National Infrastructure Commission to streamline the funding streams for local transport and give local authorities multi-year transport funding settlements, akin to those on the national roads and the rail network. These settlements should cover revenue support for staff and for services including public transport, as well as for capital investment and for asset maintenance and renewal. Transport funding should be linked to clear social, economic and environmental objectives and justified accordingly, and should also be linked to local plans and other spatial planning policies.**

Our 2020 report noted that with the commitment to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles the Government will lose much of its income from motoring taxes. Since then, a series of reports have said that some form of road user charging must be considered to replace this revenue. **Given that the move to electric vehicles will reduce revenue from fuel and vehicle taxes, the Government needs to start planning for an alternative. It should consult on options for road user charging, potentially replacing existing fuel and vehicle taxes, and support the devolved authorities and administrations in their work on this. Any move towards road user charging should involve extensive engagement with the public and with local authorities.**

Our 2020 report said that, compared with other countries, UK local authorities do not have many powers to raise funding for transport, and do not make enough use of the powers they do have. Since then, we have seen more authorities starting to explore road charging and workplace parking levy powers, charging polluting vehicles in Clean Air Zones, and new options to fund public transport such as land value capture. This is welcome, but the UK Government should consider and experiment with new powers to allow devolved administrations and local authorities to raise money for transport measures, such as tourist levies and surcharges on local business and property taxes.

Governments and local authorities should use the tools available to capture the increase in land values to fund new public transport schemes, and should actively develop these methods and explore ways they can be extended.

The challenges facing transport planners mean that new forms of decision-making on transport projects and new ways of involving people in making those decisions are needed

This report has highlighted the very big challenges faced by those overseeing transport planning and policy in the UK. The need to decarbonise the UK transport system requires, as noted, big changes in travel behaviour as well as in transport technology; to this has been added an economic crisis with severe impacts on the cost of living and the economy. This means that “business as usual” is not an option, and this poses challenges both to the ways in which decisions about transport strategies, policies and schemes are made, and the ways these are communicated to the wider public and the public is involved in these decisions. Reforming transport appraisal – the assessment of transport projects was recommended in our 2020 report; **Governments should move further and faster to reform transport appraisal, so that it reflects the new realities and can genuinely help decision-makers. The Transport Planning Society and other professional bodies are already in dialogue with DfT and others on this, but more progress is needed.**

Planning for the future is increasingly difficult, and the use of different scenarios is increasingly widespread. **UK Governments, with the transport planning profession, should provide best-practice guidance on managing future uncertainty across all levels of government, including the development, use and interpretation of scenarios, building on the experience being built up by Transport for Wales, Transport Scotland, sub-national transport bodies in England and the Department for Transport.**

Better communication and ways to involve people in decisions are needed. The challenges facing transport require big changes in the way people travel and access goods and services. These are challenging for many people and there are in some cases polarised opinions. Changes to the way road use is paid for will be an even bigger challenge. There is a need for more fundamental and detailed consideration of ways to involve communities in future transport strategies, policies and measures using new forms of decision-making and tools such as “Commonplace”, citizens’ juries/

assemblies, focus groups etc, to allow a broader range of public involvement than traditional public consultation methods. **The TPS and others should emphasise the necessity of engagement with stakeholders and the public in skills development and transport qualifications. They should involve the relevant professionals and organisations in helping and giving guidance to transport planners and policy-makers on ways to communicate with and involve people in transport decision-making.**

Transport planning skills development is improving; Governments can help improve this further

The 2020 report identified a number of issues with skills shortages and the need to develop skills for transport planning. This is being addressed and overall there is an increasing level of skills development in response to the industry shortage identified in the 2020 report. Recognition of skills and qualifications is essential and Governments could take a lead in the transport planning field by fully recognising the qualifications for tendering processes. **The national Governments should all make it clear that TPTech, IncTP and TPP (CTPP) are relevant qualifications for tendering and costing processes.**

In conclusion

This update has found that a lot has changed since the 2020 report. Transport is facing the challenges of decarbonisation and the cost of living crisis, as well as the ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic. In response, the four Governments in the UK have all announced considerable changes in and funding for transport – this report has found interesting new approaches and also many local initiatives. It is vital that best practice is shared and is mainstreamed as quickly as practicable. Reforms in transport planning, spending and taxation will be needed – and new ways of involving people in those reforms will be critical.



Two workers in high-visibility orange and yellow safety gear are painting a yellow line on a road. They are using a yellow machine. The scene is outdoors on a city street with buildings and traffic lights in the background.



Section 1 Changes in travel patterns

As noted above, the 2020 report necessarily relied on pre-Covid travel patterns, but we now have a lot more data on what has been happening to travel since the onset of Covid. At an aggregate level, the Department for Transport has been publishing regular updates of the use of different transport modes in comparison to the pre-Covid levels in March 2020.

There has also been a detailed quantitative and qualitative study by the Centre for Research on Energy Demand Strategies, CREDS, looking at the changing travel patterns in households in England and Scotland. There have also been very useful surveys of people's travel patterns and – as importantly – their attitudes to travel, by the transport user body Transport Focus.

Overall, according to the Department for Transport statistics ¹, which cover Great Britain but not Northern Ireland, car traffic is still not back to pre-Covid levels on weekdays, though it is now in excess of it at weekends. Rail travel is at 85-90% of pre-Covid levels, though industrial action has of course seen much lower use on some days. Bus travel has steadily increased and is now around 85-90% of pre-covid levels, but at weekends is almost back to 100%. London underground and bus travel is also seeing much higher weekend use (over 90% of pre Covid levels on some weekends), but much lower (around 80%) during the week. Cycling has increased significantly – it has on some days been over 200% of pre-Covid levels (though from a low base). Van and lorry traffic is also above pre-Covid levels – van mileage is running at around 110% of pre Covid levels and lorry mileage at around 106%.

These trends are borne out by the CREDS and Transport Focus research. The CREDS report, “Less is More” ², which is based on a long term study in 10 areas, has found that car use has not recovered to pre-Covid levels, and that working from home has reduced traffic levels especially at peak times. It also does not find a “dash for cars”; among those it has surveyed, car ownership has fallen especially among young people (suggesting this may be a long-term trend), and there has been an increase in the number of households reducing from two cars to one. The Government's National Travel Survey for 2021, which covers England only, also notes that the average annual journeys (trips) remained at 21% below the 2019 levels³.

Some of this is down to an increased growth in online shopping (which may account for some of the increase in van traffic already noted). Working from home has also been a much publicised feature of the pandemic, also reducing car use – May 2021 data on local authority roads shows an earlier afternoon peak in traffic, which would support this.

The statistics available suggest that what we have seen so far is a leisure-led recovery – travel on all modes is higher at weekends than during the week, while commuter and business travel is still down on pre-Covid levels. The growth in holidays in the UK, because of lockdowns abroad and now pressures on household incomes, may have influenced this.⁴

There has also been a huge growth in active travel – the CREDS surveys have found a big increase in walking, and

the Government's Covid travel statistics, as already noted, show an increase in cycling (though the 2021 National Travel Survey found a fall in cycling of 27% compared with 2020 and 7% compared with 2019 before the pandemic)⁵.

Public transport use saw a sharp decline with lockdowns, but there has since been a slow recovery. This has varied in different area and markets – some pro-active bus operators have carried out active marketing, fares reductions (e.g. £1 after 7pm) and service improvements, and claim to have patronage back to or above pre-Covid levels⁶. The general public's renewed willingness to use public transport was demonstrated by the success of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, with record-breaking use of public transport, which was free to ticket holders. The use of the cycle hire scheme in Birmingham doubled as well.

The rise in freight transport, already noted, has also spread to the railways; railfreight (measured in tone-kilometres) was up 11.8% in 2021-22 compared with the previous year, and 1.8% compared with 2 years previously. Within this, it is recording the highest non-coal freight volumes ever⁷.

The “State of the Nations” report noted that car use dominated travel before Covid, but that walking accounted for a large proportion of local travel, and rail had a sizeable share of longer distance travel. Covid has not fundamentally changed this picture, but it has changed emphasis within it, especially with the growth of walking and the decline in business travel. There is of course a question of whether the changes in travel since Covid are likely to last. Transport Focus's research⁸ has found that many people who previously used public transport are cautious about returning to it⁹, though as Covid restrictions have been lifted the numbers expressing this concern have fallen. However, the CREDS report notes that “even if people who have worked from home go back to travelling for half of their working week, there will still be a reduction of 16% in car commute miles”.

This suggests that at least some of the changes brought about by – or accelerated because of – Covid, are likely to last over the longer term. The National Infrastructure Commission has reviewed the evidence on this¹⁰ and has concluded that many changes are likely to last. This, as the CREDS authors argue, could have some positive results, but they will also bring challenges. Public transport has

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>. Data on London travel trends is available at <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/coronavirus-covid-19-mobility-report>

2 Less is More: <https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/less-is-more-changing-travel-in-a-post-pandemic-society/>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2021> – this year's survey does come with caveats about sample sizes and how representative it is.

4 <https://www.trafficstechnologytoday.com/news/covid-19-news/uk-traffic-volumes-exceed-pre-covid-levels-with-differences.html>

5 This is from a low base – cycling was 2% of UK journeys pre-pandemic compared with 26% in the Netherlands and 10% in Germany. “Cycling Facts: New Insights”, Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis, October 2020, <https://s23705.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Netherlands-Cycling-Facts-2020.pdf>, p13

6 See e.g. <https://www.passengertransport.co.uk/2022/05/are-weekends-key-to-patronage-recovery/> 5 May 2022

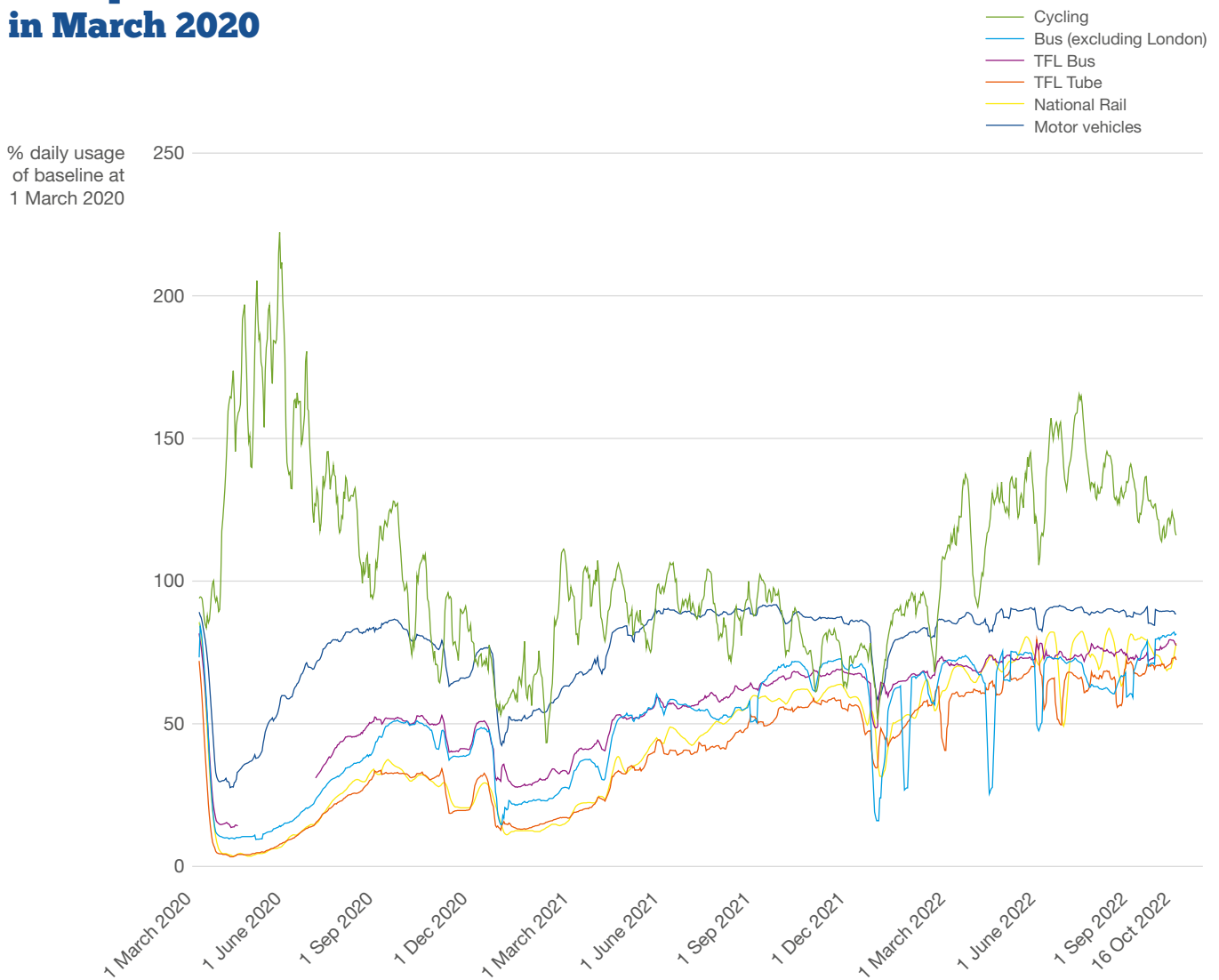
7 Office of Rail and Road, Freight rail usage and performance, Jan-March 2022 - <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/media/2062/freight-rail-usage-and-performance-jan-mar-2022.pdf>

8 <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/home/coronavirus-latest/coronavirus-insight/>.

9 <https://findingspress.org/article/37378-changes-in-travel-behaviour-during-the-pandemic-exploring-why-public-transport-is-not-back-to-pre-pandemic-levels-the-issues-around-public-transport-are-not-confined-to-the-uk>. This study in Oslo shows that the caution in using public transport, combined with remote/hybrid working and fares that aren't suited to this, account for reduced public transport use

10 <https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/behaviour-change-and-infrastructure-beyond-covid-19/>

Transport use since the Coronavirus outbreak in March 2020



Daily usage of transport by mode: Great Britain, since 1 March 2020. Source: Department for Transport

traditionally relied on commuting and business travel to bring in revenue, and discounted off peak and leisure travel in order to fill seats. With lower commuting levels and less business travel, the finances of public transport will be difficult, and previous business models will need to be revisited. In particular, the approach by the UK Government, which has been to reduce public funding for public transport and seek to rely on income from fares, will need to be reviewed.

This is the more urgent with the economic issues that have arisen in 2022. The increase in the cost of energy and in prices and costs more generally, as a result of the war in Ukraine and other pressures, are leading to significant pressures on household budgets, people's living standards and also on business costs and economics. Impacts on travel patterns as a result

of these pressures are not yet clear but are likely to be significant¹¹. Section 2 below suggests that the Government will have to find more funding to support public transport through this cost of living crisis, if service cuts are to be avoided. Section 3 suggests that Governments should reduce or at the minimum freeze public transport fares as a response to this following the pattern in other countries (Northern Ireland has already frozen fares, and Scotland has frozen rail fares).

However, the longer term changes in travel patterns, and more recent increases in costs and inflation, do pose questions about the business cases underpinning transport projects. The "State of the Nations" report in 2020 made the case for revisiting the way in which business cases are created and we will return to this below.

¹¹ A recent survey suggests that with high fuel prices a third of motorists are walking more, 17% are using public transport more, 7% are cycling more and 38% are driving more economically <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/media-policy/media-enquiries/news-details/2022/11/04/a-green-lining-how-soaring-fuel-costs-have-driven-motorists-to-greener-forms-of-transport>

With all of this, the caveats in the 2020 report about the need to disaggregate data on travel patterns remain. There are still large differences in travel patterns between different income and age groups, between men and women and between different types of places; some of these differences, notably on gender and income, may have become more pronounced since Covid and the cost of living crisis is adding another twist to these. Changes in commuting and shopping patterns may reflect these differences, but it is as yet hard to say what the longer term effects of Covid and of the economic crisis will be on these differences. What can be said is that disaggregating travel patterns, identifying the different kinds of journeys made by different groups in society, and ensuring these differences are fully reflected in transport planning, is even more essential now¹².

Northern Ireland

For various reasons, the 2020 report did not cover Northern Ireland, but this update has endeavoured to do so. In general, travel in Northern Ireland has, like the other UK nations, been very car based – in the 2017-2019 Travel Survey for Northern Ireland, 71% of journeys and 83% of total distance travelled were by car, but, again as with other nations walking accounted for a large number (18%) of trips. Public transport accounted for 5% of journeys and 7% of mileage. While travel to primary schools was 61% by car, 23% active travel and 15% public transport, for secondary schools (12-18 year olds) public transport was the main mode (46%), while active travel accounted for 19% and car for 31% of trips. In 2020 during the pandemic average journey length dropped (from 6.8 miles to 5.5 miles), and (perhaps partly as a result) the proportion of journeys on foot went up to 27%. As elsewhere, public transport use dropped significantly¹³. There has been some increase in public transport use in parts of Northern Ireland, notably with the new bus rapid transit “Glider” services . However, as we note below, Northern Ireland has seen a pattern of very low density rural development which is very car-based, though some efforts are being made to change this. In common with other UK nations, traffic volumes are now roughly 90% of pre-Covid levels, and public transport patronage is around 80% . However, one study has suggested that remote/hybrid working could result in more permanent changes in travel patterns (in common with those identified by CREDS in England and Scotland); the Northern Ireland Civil Service is setting up a “Connect2 Regional Hubs” programme, and other public sector organisations may join this.



¹² The Gender Equality Toolkit in Transport, <https://www.the-get-it.com/toolkit-hub>, is set up to help this.

¹³ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/infrastructure/tsni-headline-report-2017-2019.pdf>; <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/infrastructure/tsni-headline-report-2020.pdf>

Section 2 Government responses to Covid and these trends

Governments responded to the changes in travel during Covid in various ways, in particular supporting active travel and public transport. However, the current economic crisis is leading to new and very large challenges, especially to public transport where there is a risk of new “transport deserts”.

Support for active travel initiatives

As we have noted, the pandemic saw an upsurge in walking and cycling. The UK Government, the devolved administrations and many local authorities have encouraged this through a range of policy measures and through funding.

The UK government was very forthright in this area. It made available “emergency active travel funds” to English local authorities to pay for schemes to give pedestrians and cycling space and priority over other transport¹⁴, and has been prepared to claw funding back if unhappy with the results¹⁵. We noted in our 2020 report that the “Gear Change” strategy for cycling and walking marked a new approach to raising standards and increasing funding; since then, a “one year on” progress report has been produced¹⁶ and many of the commitments in the original strategy have been progressed, including reforms to the Highway Code, a new design standards note¹⁷, more powers for councils to enforce traffic laws and more funding for “school streets”, low traffic neighbourhoods and cycle lanes. Other commitments in the plan,

including a ban on pavement parking and a new road safety strategic framework, have been consulted on but decisions have not yet been announced.

All this represents a significant new approach to active travel, and the new body, Active Travel England, which has started work this year, is set to continue progress. A framework document¹⁸ sets out its responsibilities and objectives – it will hold the active travel budget in England, review active travel provision in planning applications and assess applications for active travel funding (including road investment), only awarding funding to schemes meeting the design standards. To help with these tasks and with allocating money, it has begun rating councils on their walking and cycling ambitions¹⁹.

The other governments in the UK have supported active travel. In Scotland, the Government is committed to spend 10% of its transport budget on active travel (£320m) by 2024-25²⁰ and has appointed an “ambassador for active travel”. The Welsh Government, which passed an “Active Travel Act” in 2013, has an “active travel fund” and has also legislated to make 20 mph the default speed limit on local roads. The Northern Ireland government in its “Blue Green Fund” has funded greenways and active travel projects, including in more rural areas²¹, though it has been suggested that this has not been a priority in the past and many areas have no safe active travel infrastructure²². There is however cross-party support for going further and, like Scotland, spending 10% of transport funding on active travel²³.

These programmes and projects have in some cases been controversial, and some of the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods have been particularly divisive.

14 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-active-travel-fund-local-transport-authority-allocations>

15 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2021/06/16/no-funding-for-paint-uk-government-warns-local-authorities-to-be-ambitious-when-bidding-for-cycling-cash/?sh=191f34e531ce>

16 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007815/gear-change-one-year-on.pdf

17 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

18 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-framework-document-for-working-with-department-for-transport>

19 <https://cyclingindustry.news/active-travel-england-guides-councils-toward-constrained-infrastructure-cash/>

20 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/active-travel/developing-an-active-nation/>; <https://www.sustainabletravel.scot/> lists the various schemes and funds

21 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/odowd-announces-funding-councils-greenway-development>

22 <https://www.newry.ie/news/on-your-bike>

23 <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/evolution/news/71180/majority-of-northern-ireland-s-assembly-backs-10-active-travel-funding-pledge>

There have been studies showing that they lead to more walking and cycling and that car use has been reduced²⁴, but these have been disputed; in particular there is concern that they understate the impact on the boundary roads around the LTNs²⁵ and on those living there. A report on LTNs by the Centre for London²⁶ concluded that “LTNs are effective but are only one part of the solution to reduce private car use and create healthier streets”. Research by the disability charity Transport for All into the impact of LTNs on disabled people put LTNs in the context of a “hostile and inaccessible transport system” and argued that disabled voices are not present in decision-making on streetscapes (especially during Covid) and they need to be fully involved in the design of such schemes²⁷. Transport planner Lucy Marstrand-Taussig has argued²⁸ that some of the debates around LTNs and school streets ignore the needs of women, children, older people and ethnic minorities and that inclusive design guidance needs to encompass the needs of all groups including children. We return to the issue of public engagement in section 6.

Some cities have embraced this approach – the active travel Bee Network in Greater Manchester is designed to routes that are fit for a 12 year old, a double buggy or a wheelchair user²⁹.

The new emphasis on and support and funding for active travel is welcomed by transport planners, and many good schemes are being implemented. In general provision for more walking and cycling is popular and ministers should carry on supporting it rather than backtracking from it. Active travel should be mainstreamed in all transport programmes, notably on the management of and investment in major roads, backed by up to date design guidelines and other technical documents, such as the long awaited refresh of Manual for Streets. However, design for active travel schemes needs to be genuinely inclusive and help all users. Consultation and engagement on proposed active travel schemes also needs to be robust and comprehensive.

Support for public transport

As noted, public transport patronage plummeted during the pandemic, especially during the lockdowns, not helped by UK government advice to “avoid public transport” (see box). All four UK Governments provided significant funding to their public transport operators to keep services going in some form.

On the railways, the pandemic led to the end of the rail franchising system. In England, the Department for Transport set up “emergency measures agreements” with the privately owned train companies to ensure that rail services would continue to operate. From September 2020 they were replaced by “Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements” (ERMAs) and these are gradually being transferred into new National Rail Contracts³⁰. This relates to longer term reform of the railways, set out below.

The Scottish Government followed a similar path, with Emergency Measures Agreements for ScotRail and Caledonian sleeper operators. However, in April 2022 Scotrail services were transferred to public control and ownership and in October 2022 the Scottish Government gave notice that the current Caledonian sleeper contract will be terminated from April 2023. In Wales, the Wales & Borders rail franchise was ended and in February 2021 responsibility for rail operations was transferred to a subsidiary of Transport for Wales, the Government’s transport delivery organisation. This is covered in more detail in section 4 below.

On local transport, Governments similarly provided a lot of support. The Department for Transport continued existing funding to the bus industry in England outside London, but in addition gave a series of funding tranches. This “Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant” was then replaced by the Bus Recovery Grant. Initially due to finish in March 2022, this grant was extended to October and then again to March 2023. The Government also gave a series of tranches to English light rail operators to keep their services running. In Scotland, a similar “Covid-19 Support Grant” was created; this was replaced in April 2022 by a Network Support Grant. The Welsh Government also created a “Bus Emergency package” but has announced longer term plans to move towards bus franchising and is reviewing its Bus Services Support Grant to bridge the gap to franchising.

24 <https://findingspress.org/article/17128-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-car-use-and-active-travel-evidence-from-the-people-and-places-survey-of-outer-london-active-travel-interventions>; <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/for-professionals/infrastructure/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design/an-introductory-guide-to-low-traffic-neighbourhood-design-contents/design-guide/all/5-a-guide-to-the-evidence-around-low-traffic-neighbourhoods>

25 <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/evolution/news/70231/ltns-unfair-and-divisive-says-campaigner-stewart>

26 <https://www.centreforlondon.org/publication/london-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/>

27 <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/campaigns-and-research/pave-the-way/> January 2021

28 [https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/evolution/news/69199/do-inclusive-transport-strategies-really-consider-the-needs-of-all-/,](https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/evolution/news/69199/do-inclusive-transport-strategies-really-consider-the-needs-of-all-/) 29 June 2021

29 <https://beeactive.tfgm.com/bee-network-vision/>; <https://beeactive.tfgm.com/terminology-explained/>;

30 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-under-emergency-agreements/details-of-operational-support-payments-to-franchised-passenger-rail-operators-under-emergency-agreements> gives details of the funding given to the rail operators in England. <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/payments-to-rail-franchises-under-the-emergency-measures-agreements-september-2020-to-march-2021/> gives similar detail for Scotland.

In Northern Ireland, where most public transport is publicly owned and run by the Government subsidiary Translink, the Northern Ireland Government provided extra funding to make up for lost revenue on rail and bus and created a “Bus Operator Financial Assistance Scheme” for other smaller bus and coach operators.

Public transport use and revenue in the UK suffered from some of the public health messages during the pandemic, especially from the UK Government, which in some advertising implied that people should avoid it completely. This contrasted with some of the messaging from other Governments and transport authorities. However, transport operators and the transport authorities including Transport for London responded well, with good messaging and generally high public approval according to Transport Focus research. Lessons should be learnt on messaging around public transport in any future public health emergency³¹.

Rail investment plans: Despite the reduced use of public transport, all the Governments in the UK have made commitments to investing in it and increasing its use. The UK Government has produced major reform proposals for the railways and a strategy for buses. On the railways, the “Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail”, published in May 2021³², proposes the creation of “Great British Railways”, which will own and run the track and stations and also let contracts for running many of the passenger trains on the network. Legislation to enable this is planned, as part of a Transport Bill announced in the May 2022 Queen’s Speech³³ though this has now been delayed and use of existing powers is being explored to make progress in the meantime³⁴. There has however been concern expressed that the new rail structures are not linked to local transport authorities and do not give options for furthering devolved control over local rail services and stations³⁵, so putting barriers in the way of integrated local transport networks.

Fares reform

The Government’s rail reforms are welcome and should proceed – delays will result in uncertainty. However, the reforms should promote closer links between the rail network and local transport networks, including through further devolution of rail services and support for investment in local stations and other rail assets. The rail ticketing system should be reformed to enable integrated zonal fares across all public transport, especially in the city regions.

The UK Government has also announced funding for rail investment. Its Integrated Rail Plan³⁶, announced in November 2021, is a £96bn package of investment for the Midlands and North of England, with electrification and upgrades for the Midland Main Line in the East Midlands, the Transpennine main line between Manchester, Leeds and York and some sections of new lines including extensions to HS2 and a Warrington to Marsden in Yorkshire line. An upgrade to the East Coast Main Line is also included. Big though this is, it represented a downgrading of previous plans to bring HS2 to Sheffield and Leeds and a “Northern Powerhouse Rail” line across the North³⁷. Other individual rail investment projects have also been announced, but some, such as upgrading lines through Ely which would enable more rail freight traffic to Felixstowe, have not progressed, and a promised “Rail Network Enhancement Programme”, setting out all rail upgrade plans, has yet to appear. A “Union Connectivity Review”, looking at better transport connectivity between the UK nations was launched in November 2021³⁸ and recommends upgrades and investment in some key transport corridors, including on the railways.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government has a rail decarbonisation programme which includes electrification of many lines and is promoting other upgrades³⁹. The Welsh Government is pursuing the “South East Metro” project, electrifying and upgrading the Valley lines around Cardiff and Newport, and is pursuing other projects as part of the outcomes from the South East Wales Transport Commission. A similar North Wales Transport Commission is expected to recommend other upgrades there. In Northern Ireland, upgrades to the rail network are being considered as part of an All-Island Strategic Rail Review⁴⁰, including faster trains and more capacity.

31 See <https://www.alliancembs.manchester.ac.uk/original-thinking-applied/original-thinkers/covid-19-and-the-safety-of-public-transport/> also see Krusche et al, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8860671/> March 2022

32 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail>

33 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/williams-shapps-plan-for-rail-legislative-changes-to-implement-rail-reform>

34 <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/14965/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>

35 <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/consultation-responses/response-consultation-legislation-implement-rail>

36 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands>

37 <https://transportforthenorth.com/northern-powerhouse-rail/>

38 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1036027/union-connectivity-review-final-report.pdf

39 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/rail/prioritisation-of-rail-projects/>

40 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-paper-all-island-strategic-rail-review>; <https://strategicrailreview.com/>

All the UK Governments have in addition been pursuing reopenings of railway lines to passenger services, and new stations on existing lines. The UK Government’s “Restoring your Railways” programme has resulted in funding for various feasibility studies into reopened lines and stations⁴¹. One, a regular passenger services to Okehampton in Devon, opened in November 2021 and services have since been increased⁴². Other lines where reopening is in prospect are in Northumberland, where an innovative “land value capture” scheme has been used for part of its finance (see section 5 below), the Portishead line in Bristol and the Waterside line to Fawley near Southampton. A number of new stations have also been funded. Separately the first phase of the East-West Rail line, which is intended eventually to reopen the Oxford-Cambridge rail line via Milton Keynes, is under construction.



Okehampton station on the first day of the restored Dartmoor Line, November 2021

The other UK governments are also looking at investing in new/reopened lines and stations. The Scottish Government is reopening the line to Levenmouth and has funded various new stations. The Welsh Government has funded some new stations and has been investigating some reopenings including to Amlwch on Anglesey. In Northern Ireland, alongside the All Island Strategic Rail Review, initial feasibility studies of potential reopenings are being undertaken, such as Portadown to Armagh.

Bus and light rail investment: Governments in the UK have also made commitments to invest in local public transport, principally buses. The UK Government produced a national bus strategy, “Bus Back Better”, in March 2021⁴³, and asked councils to prepare “Bus

Service Improvement Plans”(BSIPs). In the event, only 31 authorities received funding for their BSIPs⁴⁴, leaving over half of English transport authorities without any direct funding for bus investment. Some city regions received funding for bus investment as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (see section 5 below). Scotland has a “Bus Partnership Fund”⁴⁵ which funds targeted bus priority measures; Northern Ireland is investing in projects such as the Belfast Transport Hub and Wales has a range of bus station and bus corridor investments planned, including in the TrawsCymru long distance services, and as noted is developing plans for longer term bus support⁴⁶.

In addition, local public transport investment is being promised in mass transit systems, through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements in England (more on this section 5). Some of this is funding extra light rail/metro services, and there is also funding for a feasibility study into a tram network in Leeds. The Scottish Transport Projects Review, published in January 2022, mentions mass transit schemes in Scottish cities though there are few details⁴⁷. In Wales, the focus is on creating metro services on local rail lines, notably the Valley lines through the SE Wales Metro programme.

In all four countries, funding has also been given to zero emission buses. Scotland has a “zero emission Bus Challenge Fund”⁴⁸, Northern Ireland has funded Translink to buy zero/low emission buses including making all buses in Derry/Londonderry zero emission, and the Welsh Government is funding the conversion of its TrawsCymru long distance bus network to zero emission by 2026, with a target for all Wales buses being zero emission by 2035 (a funding scheme for this is promised in the next year).

Challenges facing public transport: this investment and commitment to expand public transport does however come against a backdrop of significant financial challenges. As noted in section 1, public transport use has not yet returned to pre-Covid levels in many areas and services. This means that the entire sector is facing financial challenges, and the cost of living crisis and resultant recession will merely add to these.

This issue is playing out differently in different areas and sectors. On the railways, the Government is seeking significant economies in how the railways are run (reportedly 10% savings⁴⁹), and this, combined with the impacts of inflation on the rail workforce, is leading to

41 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restoring-your-railway-fund-programme-update> June 2022

42 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/restoring-your-railway-passengers-to-see-dartmoor-line-services-doubled>

43 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better>

44 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cheaper-and-better-buses-in-7-billion-package-to-level-up-transport-outside-london> ; <https://www.route-one.net/news/under-half-of-bsip-submissions-are-funded-in-1-1bn-award/>

45 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/buses/bus-partnership-fund/>

46 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-07/national-transport-delivery-plan-2022-to-2027.pdf>

47 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/strategic-transport-projects-review-2/>

48 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/buses/scottish-zero-emission-bus-challenge-fund/>

49 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/dec/05/back-bad-old-days-swingeing-rail-cuts-alarm-bells-ringing>



industrial relations conflicts, with trade unions seeking pay rises that reflect the inflation pressures and the Government and rail operators seeking reform of working practices as part of this. This conflict has led to a series of strikes by different unions. In addition, many services removed from the timetables during Covid have not been reinstated, and driver shortages are contributing to this; some areas like West Yorkshire are seeing further cuts⁵⁰ and some inter-city West Coast services run by Avanti between London, Birmingham and Manchester have been reduced significantly.

On buses, in England the Covid funding support was due to finish in October 2022. However, as noted in section 1, ridership has not recovered to pre-Covid levels and the impact of inflation and hugely increased fuel and energy costs have hit a number of operators hard, with some going out of business and a number of services being withdrawn or cut back in advance of the October deadline. Eventually, on 19 August 2022, the Government

announced further funding for bus services from October 2022 until March 2023⁵¹ but by then many operators had already given notice of cuts in services. These cuts vary, but some areas like South Yorkshire are seeing especially drastic cuts, with on one estimate only 4 bus routes running after 10pm across the whole city region. As with the railways, staff shortages and also industrial relations issues with high inflation outstripping pay offers has led to strikes in some areas. A respected transport operator, Roger French, has set out the challenges facing public transport in his “Bus and Train User” blog⁵². The Urban Transport Group has urged a long term, enhanced and devolved approach to funding bus services⁵³.

Throughout the pandemic and afterwards, London has been a special case. The Government has made a series of short term funding arrangements to keep Transport for London services running but there has been a continuing saga of conflict between the Government and the Mayor of London, as a result of which there has been no long

50 <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/all-news-and-blogs/anger-as-local-rail-services-are-set-to-be-cut-in-may/>

51 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/130-million-to-protect-bus-services-across-the-country>

52 <https://busandtrainuser.com/2022/08/13/transport-turmoil/#more-35552>

53 <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/briefings/funding-better-future-urban-public-transport> August 2022; <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/media-centre/press-releases/urban-transport-group-responds-government-bus-funding-announcement>

term agreement on financing London's transport. A longer term funding settlement was agreed in August 2022, but this in fact only runs until the end of March 2024⁵⁴.

Irrespective of the immediate arguments, it should be noted that London, unlike other major world cities, gets no direct central Government funding for its transport system; it relied before Covid on fares, property income and local taxation for its funding⁵⁵. Previously there was a Government operating grant, but this ceased in 2018. There is some direct and indirect Government funding for specific investment projects such as the Elizabeth line (Crossrail). In fact London's roads get no direct central Government support, so public transport fares cross-subsidise spending on roads in London. This fares-led model, which is different from other world cities⁵⁶, left London very exposed to the impact of Covid, when fares income plummeted with lockdowns.

It should be noted that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have different approaches here. Support to bus operators has continued, so immediate cuts have been largely avoided. However, the same pressures are present: the increased costs and reduced revenue as a result of the economic crisis will affect transport operations in all the UK nations.

The loss of public transport services has huge social impacts. As the Urban Transport Group briefing says, "it would have a disproportionate effect on low-income households and areas, disabled people, women and ethnic minorities", and it would undermine the objectives of key Government policies for decarbonisation and levelling up. A report in 2020⁵⁷ found that there are already areas of "transport deserts" with limited or no public transport or even taxis, and pointed out the consequences for social exclusion and poor access to services (section 3 covers this in more detail)

The economic crisis, with increased costs and reduced ridership and revenue for public transport compared to the pre-Covid era, poses a huge challenge for transport planners and policy-makers. Previous business models and the traditional UK Government approach, described in our 2020 report as "users paying most or all of the costs of the transport services", will need to be revisited, as has been shown by the fate of London, once regarded as an exemplar for running with no central Government funding.

The crisis in public transport raises big social issues. Without more and continued Government support, there will be an increase in "transport deserts" which will leave more people and communities isolated and add to social exclusion, isolation, loneliness and mental health problems.

In addition, high quality and affordable public transport services are needed to reduce road congestion and are the more necessary now to tackle air pollution and climate change.

Other countries recognise these wider impacts and are funding their public transport accordingly. The UK Government should do the same rather than seek to cut funding and services and raise fares; doing so will create a vicious spiral of decline and add to social and environmental problems. Long term, enhanced and devolved funding settlements for transport authorities (including London) and for devolved administrations will support the economy and help people and communities; continued investment in new and upgraded public transport and in active travel will help sustain and create jobs and contribute to decarbonisation and tackling social exclusion. Transport planners will need to be vocal in making these points, given the prevailing pressures on day-today revenue funding.

54 <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/investors/funding-letters>

55 <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/how-we-are-funded>

56 <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/whats-next-for-transport-for-london/> June 2022

57 <https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/transport-deserts-2020.pdf>

Section 3

Decarbonisation and social exclusion

Government Policies

The State of the Nations report highlighted the impacts of current travel patterns. It noted the benefits of car ownership and the independent mobility that cars have brought to some. But the car has led to the erosion of active travel and independent mobility particularly for others, most notably children.⁵⁸ Those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act are also often bearing the brunt of the harmful consequences of automobility –pollution, road danger, severance and climate change. This section sets out some of these downsides to the dominance of private motor vehicles on or roads and in current travel patterns:

- **Air pollution:** vehicle exhausts, tyres and brakes produce pollutants including particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, and these have severe impacts on various aspects of human health; and is particularly damaging to older people, pregnant women, babies and children^{59 60}. New research has found further health impacts, including on dementia⁶¹. Under pressure from legal judgments, the Government has ordered cities to develop plans to bring pollution levels down through Clean Air Zones. Since the 2020

report, Clean Air Zones have been introduced in Bath, Birmingham and Portsmouth and the London Ultra Low Emission Zone has expanded; more cities are planning to implement Clean Air Zones⁶² in the next few years. Belfast City Council has declared four areas as Air Quality Management Areas and set out a plan to reduce nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate emissions across the city⁶³. Scotland is establishing Low Emission Zones, initially in four cities this year and elsewhere in 2023⁶⁴.

- **Road deaths and injuries:** crashes on the roads cause deaths and injuries. Over three quarters of injury deaths for 10–18-year-olds are related to motor traffic⁶⁵ and traffic deaths are the leading cause of death for children nationally⁶⁶. Overall road casualties dropped during the lockdowns in 2020, but rose again in 2021 as Covid restrictions eased; deaths on Britain's roads rose 7% 2020-21, but deaths and injuries in general were still down on the pre-Covid levels⁶⁷. Cycling casualties per mile travelled were down, but many adults are still too afraid to cycle due to fear of being hit and injured or killed by a driver, and, as noted above, children's mobility on foot or cycle has been significantly curtailed to compensate for the risk posed by adults driving. Northern Ireland has seen fewer road deaths in 2021 compared with 2019 and 2020, but higher road death rates (30 per million population) compared with 22 in England and Wales and 26 in Scotland⁶⁸.

58 Shaw, B., Fagan-Watson, B., Frauendienst, B., Redecker, A., Jones, T. and Hillman, M., 2013. Children's independent mobility: a comparative study in England and Germany (1971-2010), see <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/8z178/children-s-independent-mobility-a-comparative-study-in-england-and-germany-1971-2010>

59 Holst, G.J., Pedersen, C.B., Thygesen, M., Brandt, J., Geels, C., Bønløkke, J.H. and Sigsgaard, T., 2020. Air pollution and family related determinants of asthma onset and persistent wheezing in children: nationwide case-control study. <https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m2791.short>

60 Peled, R., 2011. Air pollution exposure: Who is at high risk?. *Atmospheric Environment*, 45(10), pp.1781-1785. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1352231011000033>

61 "Air pollution: Cognitive decline and dementia", Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) July 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-cognitive-decline-and-dementia>

62 A current list of Clean Air Zones is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-a-clean-air-zone#cities-with-clean-air-zones>

63 <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/belfast-city-air-quality-action-plan-2021-2026>, November 2021

64 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/environment/low-emission-zones/>

65 <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/why-children-die-research-recommendations>, 2014

66 https://issuu.com/jess.read/docs/iwalk_2020

67 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-provisional-results-2021/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-provisional-results-2021>

68 <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ni-road-safety-partnership>

- **Congestion and severance:** high levels of traffic lead to congestion on roads, with consequent economic costs, at £8bn on one estimate⁶⁹. Higher traffic levels blight communities with people less likely to speak to neighbours as traffic levels increase. This growth in traffic has a detrimental impact on quality of life, freedom of movement, noise and air pollution, particularly for older and disabled people, and women (who are less comfortable mixing with motor traffic and more likely to be caring for children and accompanying them) and children. The growth in Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (and the debates around those) is one response to this.

The 2020 report highlighted other impacts from car dominance, including **physical inactivity** and its contribution to a range of poor public health outcomes, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, with low levels of walking and cycling.

However, two impacts deserve more detailed scrutiny, since there has been more attention on them in the last two years.



New housing is still very car dependent - photo Transport for New Homes

Decarbonisation of transport – progress, but more to do

Since the 2020 report, a lot has happened on climate change, especially in relation to transport. The UK Government hosted the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow in November 2021, This, and the wider push for action on climate change, has been

informed by the increasing evidence of the climate crisis and the calls from climate scientists for urgent action to address it and to keep global temperature rise within the 1.5 degrees C set out at the previous UN climate summit in Paris.

The need for action to tackle greenhouse gas emissions has become more urgent. It has been underlined by a series of extreme weather events in the UK and elsewhere – in the summer of 2022, parts of the UK saw the highest temperatures ever recorded and a prolonged drought, and there have been a series of fires and flood events that caused severe damage to property and countryside. Further afield, many countries have experienced very high temperatures and resultant wildfires as well as flash floods from very high rainfall. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that these are linked to greenhouse gas emissions and resulting global heating. These events have huge impacts on people and communities – they also have very high economic costs.

The UK, with its commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, has so far been a leader in international action to tackle climate change, and transport, as the largest sector of emissions in the UK, is a key focus for action.

The 2020 report covered extensively the impacts of current transport patterns on carbon emissions, and the need to decarbonise transport. In 2019, the transport sector was responsible for 27% of UK carbon emissions⁷⁰, 17% of emissions in Wales, 25% of emissions in Scotland⁷¹ and 22% of Northern Ireland emissions⁷². Transport emissions fell during 2020 because of the restrictions on travel during the Covid lockdowns, but have since rebounded. It should be noted that these figures exclude emissions from international aviation and shipping – in Scotland, where these are included, transport accounted for 35.6% of emissions in 2018⁷³.

The 2020 report noted the UK Government's moves towards a decarbonisation plan, and similar plans by the other UK nations. Since then, the need for the transport system to decarbonise has moved to the centre of transport policy-making. In July 2021, the Government published its Transport Decarbonisation Plan⁷⁴, and this year has published a report on the first year's progress on the plan⁷⁵.

69 <https://inrix.com/scorecard/>; <https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/news/car-industry-news/2021/12/08/fleets-and-drivers-lose-73-hours-and-595-to-congestion-in-2021#:~:text=Data%20published%20by%20the%20Inrix,down%20from%20115%20in%202019>

70 https://www.statista.com/topics/6270/transport-emissions-in-the-uk/#topicHeader__wrapper

71 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2021/06/scottish-greenhouse-gas-statistics-1990-2019/documents/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2019/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2019/govscot%3Adocument/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2019.pdf>

72 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory>

73 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/carbon-account-for-transport-no-12-2020-edition/emissions-trends-for-scotland/>

74 Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>

75 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decarbonising-transport-one-year-on-review>

It is fair to say that the Plan is a far-reaching document. Alongside a headline commitment to phase out new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030, the plan includes targets to phase out fossil fuel engines from all other forms of surface transport. In particular, setting a target for phasing out diesel heavy goods vehicles by 2040 is a world-leading move. At the COP26 summit, the UK used the commitments in the Plan to gather support from other countries, and from companies where appropriate, to support its ambitions on transport decarbonisation.

The moves towards electric and zero-emission vehicles has tended to gather the main focus of politicians and media coverage. The Government has underpinned these moves by a proposed zero-emission vehicles mandate⁷⁶ and by a strategy to support electric vehicle charging infrastructure⁷⁷. These are important and have seen a growth in sales of electric vehicles.

However, the Decarbonisation Plan also included a number of commitments on the way in which transport is used. The former Transport Secretary Grant Shapps in his foreword to the Plan repeated a commitment, first set out in the consultation on the Plan⁷⁸ (and noted in our 2020 report) to “make public transport, cycling and walking the natural first choice for all who can take it”. He commented that “many journeys are short, could be done differently – and were done differently, in the very recent past. Even ten years ago, for instance, more children walked to school.”. He set out an ambition “to reduce urban road traffic overall” and said that various trends and measures “offer the opportunity for a reduction or at least stabilisation in traffic more widely”. Mr Shapps even highlighted the fact that rail and bus fares had increased in the last 20 years while the cost of motoring had fallen, and said that “gradually we will change this”, starting with buses outside London.

The plan also included a large number of other measures, several of which will support these wider ambitions and targets, such as:

- A commitment to encourage a modal shift of freight from roads to rail, cargo bikes and inland waterways
- Proposals for a new generation of Local Transport Plans, with “quantifiable carbon reductions a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding”
- A “Commute Zero” initiative to encourage and support UK businesses to reduce emissions from their employees’ travel journeys

- A commitment to “increase average road vehicle occupancy by 2030”

More generally, the Plan set out the case for much better integration between transport and spatial planning; it promised to “embed decarbonisation principles in spatial planning” and even talked of promoting “20 minute neighbourhoods”, where people can access all the services and goods they need by a 20 minute walk.

The 2020 report said that the Plan’s consultation document was potentially very significant, and this is true of the Plan itself. Many of the themes in the Plan are ones that the Transport Planning Society has called for. The need for integration between transport and spatial planning was indeed a major theme of the 2020 report, and the TPS welcomed the strategy when it was published, while highlighting some weaknesses and urging further follow-up⁷⁹.

Since the Plan’s publication, the Government has focused on the technological targets and commitments in it. It has published a strategy for investing in charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, and has moved ahead with its targets for cars, vans, HGVs and for other vehicles. On aviation, there has been a focus on “Sustainable Aviation Fuels” as part of a “Jet Zero” strategy⁸⁰. There has been less focus on the other aspects of the Plan. Yet, as the 2020 report said, “there is an increasing consensus among researchers that tackling carbon emissions from transport will require reductions in road traffic and motor vehicle use as well as moves towards electric vehicles”.

Since then this has been amplified. The Committee on Climate Change said in its 2022 report to Parliament, “Electric vehicles must not be the sole focus, with action also needed on demand and modal shift. The Government has made the significant step of acknowledging the need to limit traffic growth and has provided significant funding to some key areas, but it has not set a specific ambition or used all its available levers. It now needs to go further to set this aspect of the sectoral pathway in motion. Reducing traffic is important as it can offer immediate emissions reductions while the fleet is transitioning to ZEVs, reduce the emissions associated with ZEV production, and deliver a range of ongoing co-benefits including lower congestion, better air quality, and cost savings”⁸¹. Greener Transport Solutions, a think tank working in this area and backed by a “Greener Transport Council” drawn from many organisations and institutions in transport, says that

76 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/policy-design-features-for-the-car-and-van-zero-emission-vehicle-zev-mandate>

77 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-electric-vehicle-infrastructure-strategy>

78 Decarbonising transport: Setting the Challenge, March 2020 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/932122/decarbonising-transport-setting-the-challenge.pdf

79 <https://tps.org.uk/tps-policy/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain>

80 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jet-zero-strategy-delivering-net-zero-aviation-by-2050> Department for Transport, July 2022

81 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2022-progress-report-to-parliament/#key-messages>

“there is an emerging consensus that achieving our 2030 target for transport will require a reduction in car kms of around a quarter”⁸².

While the UK Government has not set a target to reduce vehicle mileage, devolved authorities have done so. The Scottish Government has set a target of reducing vehicle mileage in Scotland by 20% by 2030 on 2018 levels, and has set out a route map to doing this⁸³. The Welsh Government has set a similar target of reducing average car driver miles per capita to 10% below 2019 levels by 2030⁸⁴. Some English cities have also set targets – Manchester, for example, has suggested a target of 30% reduction in distance travelled as part of its overall target of becoming zero carbon by 2038⁸⁵ and Leeds has a similar target⁸⁶. Bristol’s “One City Climate Strategy” has a target for a 40% reduction in vehicle miles by 2030⁸⁷. The Mayor of London has set a target for London to be a “net zero city” by 2030, with a 27% reduction in car kms over that period⁸⁸.

The new generation of Local Transport Plans will as noted above be based on “quantified carbon reductions”, and DfT has begun to set out a methodology for this in bulletins sent to local authorities. A large number of local authorities have declared a climate emergency and taking action to put this into practice⁸⁹. However, these local efforts would be more effective if supported by a national target and strategy to reduce vehicle mileage.

There is a broader context. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan formed part of the Government’s Net Zero Strategy, which sets out how the Government intends to meet its legal obligation to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050⁹⁰. This strategy was found by the High Court to be in breach of the Climate Change Act, because it is not underpinned by measures to meet the target. According to Client Earth, one of the groups that brought the case, this means that “the government will have to update its climate strategy to include a quantified account of how its policies will achieve climate targets, based on a realistic assessment of what it actually expects them to deliver. The updated strategy will have to be presented to parliament for scrutiny by MPs”⁹¹. This will require the Government to firm up several of the measures and targets proposed in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and makes even stronger the case for a national target to reduce vehicle mileage.

Northern Ireland has also not yet produced a strategy to tackle carbon and other emissions from transport. Wider political issues have made this more difficult, but given the urgency and the challenge, a strategy is needed in Northern Ireland. As we note below, there are opportunities to make progress, but in particular the issue of spatial planning and transport will need to be tackled.

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the ambitions within it are very welcome but need to be underpinned by clear targets and measures to reduce vehicle mileage in England. The ambitions in the plan – for example to reduce urban road traffic and to increase vehicle occupancy – should be turned into quantified targets and clear strategies, evidenced by data analysis and modelling and agreed with local transport authorities and others (including other Government departments), to make them a reality. We make the case in section 4 for a National Transport Strategy for England, and these targets and interventions would be a natural part of such a strategy.

The strategies to tackle carbon emissions from transport in Wales and Scotland are very welcome. A Northern Ireland strategy to tackle carbon emissions from transport should be developed by the relevant departments and should include targets for reducing vehicle mileage, akin to those in Wales and Scotland.

Decarbonising transport should be the foundation of transport appraisal

While the need to tackle greenhouse gas emissions from transport, and the science behind this, is widely accepted in the transport planning community, there is still a tendency in appraising transport schemes to downplay carbon emissions or trade off the costs of these against other factors, notably time savings by transport users. For example, under national planning policy, a road scheme’s carbon impact is compared to the entire carbon output of the UK, which allows most of the increases in emissions to be dismissed as insignificant⁹². Professor Phil Goodwin and Professor Jillian Anable have argued that given the impacts on traffic levels and the wider economy of runaway climate change, “do minimum” or “business as usual” base cases in transport appraisal are untenable⁹³.

82 Pathways to Net Zero <https://greenertransportsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/PATHWAYS-TO-NET-ZERO-MARCH-2022-1.pdf>

83 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>

84 Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2, p13 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-10/net-zero-wales-summary-document.pdf>

85 https://www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/9068/citywide_framework_update_will_spell_out_the_size_of_the_climate_change_challenge July 2022

86 <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s226223/Connecting%20Leeds%20Report%20Appendix%20A%20111021.pdf> October 2021

87 <https://www.bristolonecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/one-city-climate-strategy.pdf> Feb 2020 p29

88 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/climate-change/zero-carbon-london/pathways-net-zero-carbon-2030>

89 See for example <https://www.uk100.org/membership>

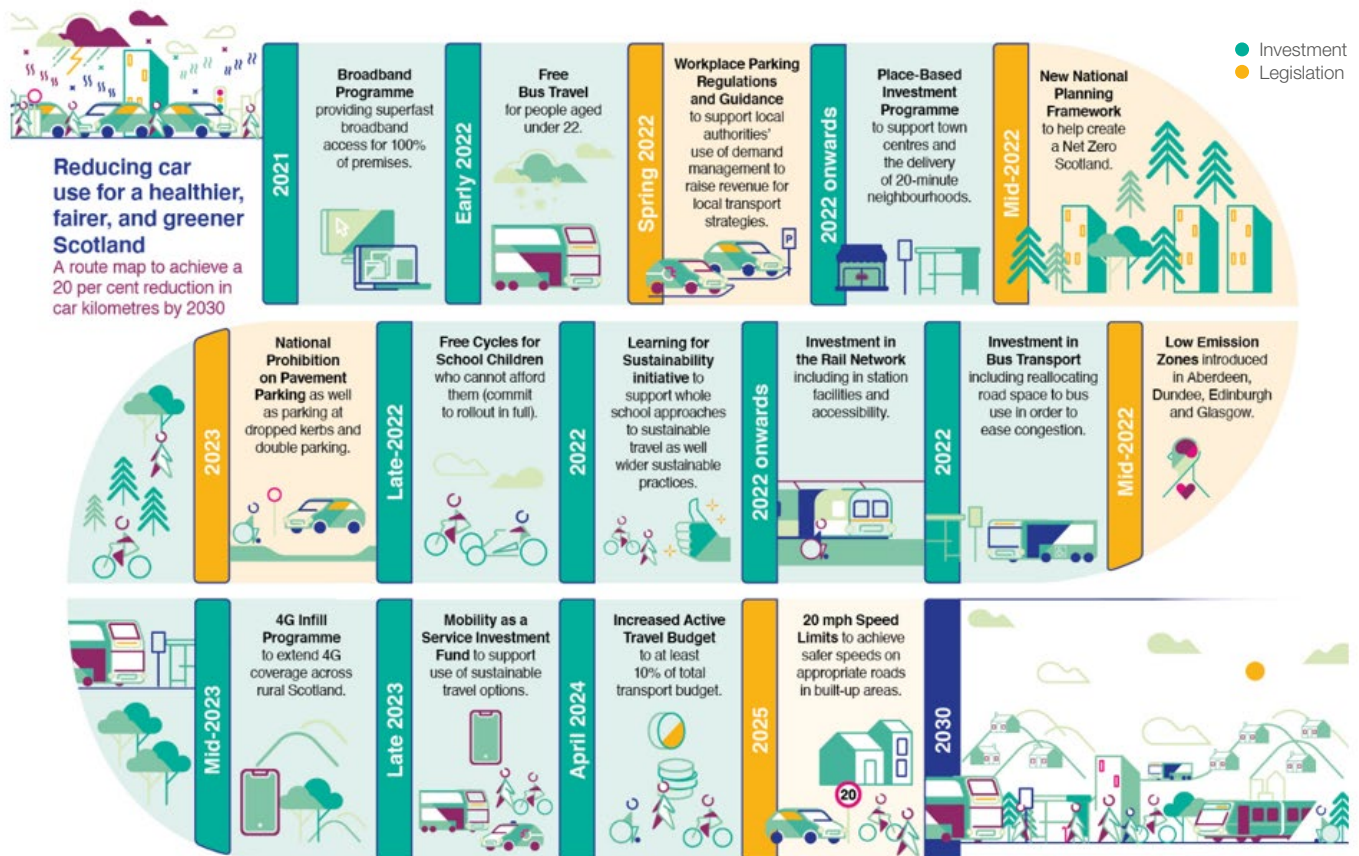
90 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>, October 2021

91 <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/press-office/press/historic-high-court-ruling-finds-uk-government-s-climate-strategy-unlawful/> 18 July 2022

92 By contrast, the economic impacts of individual road schemes are not compared to national economic outputs, only to the local “do nothing” scenarios

93 <https://discussion.itmagazine.co.uk/we-are-now-facing-two-alternative-futures-plus-an-untenable-one/> Dr Phil Goodwin, Local Transport Today, 10 August 2021

The Scottish Government's route map to reducing car mileage by 20% by 2030



Source: Transport Scotland

The Government has increased the valuation of carbon emissions to be used in policy appraisal and evaluation⁹⁴ and this is welcome, but it is not clear whether these values fully reflect the overwhelming urgency of tackling rising emission levels and are being used effectively across the transport planning profession and practice.

The Department for Transport and the devolved Governments should revisit the treatment of greenhouse gas emissions in transport appraisal, and test policies, schemes and interventions against their contributions to the pathways for reducing carbon emissions set out in their Transport Decarbonisation Plans and the Committee on Climate Change assessments. Local transport authorities should similarly assess their transport policies, strategies and spending against their targets for reducing carbon emissions from transport.

Social exclusion, the cost of living and car dependence

The 2020 report pointed out that the dependence on car travel in the transport system contributed to poverty and social exclusion. This issue has now come much to the fore with the sharp increase in inflation and prices, especially for energy, experienced during 2022, and the economic crisis this has produced. Fuel prices hit record levels in June 2022, though they have since levelled off.

In our 2020 report, we noted that the trends in the cost of transport had seen public transport fares increase by more than inflation, whereas motoring costs had fallen in real terms. This has now changed; motoring costs have risen sharply (though still below inflation), and have outstripped average wages. Bus and coach fares have however increased significantly since the outbreak of Covid⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-greenhouse-gas-emissions-in-policy-appraisal/valuation-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-for-policy-appraisal-and-evaluation>
⁹⁵ <https://www.racfoundation.org/data/cost-of-transport-index>

Immediate responses to this cost of living crisis have, for understandable reasons, focused on the cost of fuel. The then Chancellor reduced fuel duty by 5p/litre in the March budget, and there have been pressures to go further.

However, the cost of living crisis will demand more measures, linked to the other issues listed above. We have already suggested that there will need to be more support to keep public transport services going, but the cost of public transport as well as of private car use needs to be addressed. UK public transport fares, already very expensive (some estimates show them as among the most expensive in the world⁹⁶), have increased since the onset of Covid and without intervention will increase further. While other countries have reduced fuel duties, many have also reduced public transport fares, some quite significantly.

Examples include:

- **Austria:** “climate ticket” is €1095 a year, or €3 a day, for all public transport
- **Spain:** short and medium train journeys are free until the end of the year, for holders of multi-trip tickets
- **Germany** introduced a public transport scheme for €9 a month for regional transport over the summer (excluding long distance inter-city rail), and is putting in place a successor scheme, likely to be €49 a month for local public transport⁹⁷
- **Ireland:** in May public transport fares were reduced by 20% until the end of the year
- **New Zealand:** public transport fares have been halved until the end of January 2023
- **Italy:** in May the Government gave students and low income workers a €60 voucher for public transport tickets

Analysis of the German scheme suggested that it resulted in reduced car congestion and carbon emissions, an increase in rail use and 20% of users had switched to public transport for the first time⁹⁸.

In addition, many places are introducing completely free public transport. Luxembourg and Estonia are two countries that have done this (though the Estonia scheme is limited to its citizens and to some areas). A number of cities in France have also made their public transport free, and some cities in the US have also considered it; one estimate is that 96 cities worldwide have free public transport⁹⁹.

Governments in the UK have been slower to act, but in September the UK Government announced that bus fares in England would be capped at £2 for single journeys from January-March 2023¹⁰⁰. There was also a 2 month “Great British Rail sale” discount scheme for rail fares in April and May 2022. Northern Ireland has frozen public transport fares (and has more generous concessionary travel than the rest of the UK). The Scottish Government has now followed suit, freezing rail fares until at least March 2023¹⁰¹, having offered half price rail tickets during May and June 2022. It has also introduced free bus travel for young people under 22.

These build on a number of local initiatives to reduce fares or indeed make them free at certain times. The Government is supporting Cornwall Council in reducing local bus fares in the county¹⁰², capping costs at £5 a day or £20 a week, with £2.50 “town day zone” tickets in individual towns. Mayors in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Yorkshire have already introduced a £2 cap on single journeys fares and a £5 day ticket. Herefordshire and Monmouthshire Councils have made buses free in the county at weekends until the end of the year, while Swansea council has also introduced free bus travel for journeys inside the city at weekends during the summer months and school holidays. As noted above, some bus operators have introduced £1 fares after 7pm.

However, there are limits to these initiatives, and there is a case for longer term national reduction in fares, especially on buses which are used by many people on low incomes. The bus fares caps, for example, do not necessarily help people with the cost of weekly tickets¹⁰³, and in England, Scotland and Wales the situation is exacerbated by the impact of deregulation of the buses. In places where there is more than one operator, multi-operator tickets have to be treated as a premium product and priced higher than the operator’s own tickets (otherwise under competition law this counts as price fixing). This increases the cost of using public transport.

Under the current formula, rail fares will increase in 2023 by 1% above the July 2022 inflation rate of 11.7%. This will result in a significant increase in fares and will add to the pressures on household budgets, though the Government has indicated that it will suspend this formula for 2023.

⁹⁶ See for example Clean Cities Campaign City Ranking Feb 2022 - https://cleancitiescampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Clean-Cities_-City-Ranking-Rating-briefing-2.pdf

⁹⁷ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/public-transport-accessibility/news/germany-to-introduce-e49-ticket-for-public-transport/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/18/germany-faces-calls-extend-9-month-public-transport-ticket>; https://twitter.com/Jonathan_Bray/status/1547855633587703808; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/germanys-9-train-tickets-scheme-saved-18m-tons-of-co2-emissions>

⁹⁹ <https://integratedtransport.co.uk/the-time-is-right-for-free-fare-public-transport>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-bus-fare-cap-across-england-to-save-passengers-money>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/scotrail-fares-to-be-frozen-until-at-least-march-2023-confirms-nicola-sturgeon-3833427>

¹⁰² <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-news/transport-streets-and-waste/great-value-bus-travel-is-coming-to-cornwall-as-council-leads-the-way-with-pioneering-trial/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.manchesterworld.uk/news/greater-manchester-bus-fares-why-the-new-cap-wont-make-a-difference-for-many-and-some-will-pay-more-3830548>

The Governments in the UK should consider further measures to reduce local public transport fares nationally, following the initiatives in other countries. They should reduce or at least freeze rail fares in 2023. They should evaluate the results of the fares reductions in Cornwall and elsewhere and support places that want to follow this lead.

However, the issues raised by the cost of living crisis are deeper, and require a broader response. Even before the present crisis, there was a lot of research, some referenced in our 2020 report, showing that those without access to cars are excluded from employment, education and training opportunities, and this contributes to social exclusion, poverty and loneliness. It also leads to “forced car ownership”, where households run cars despite not being able to afford to maintain or in some cases tax them¹⁰⁴.

The rise in fuel costs, combined with the decline in bus services noted above, are adding to this social exclusion. At an aggregate level, increases in fuel prices have added to wider cost of living pressures, and have led to reduced car use by some: in August 2022 44% of those reporting cost of living increases had cut down “on essential travel”, 15% higher than at the beginning of the year¹⁰⁵, and we noted above a survey showing motorists changing their travel and driving¹⁰⁶.

But these pressures will be felt much more deeply in lower income groups. A new study for Transport for the North on transport-related social exclusion¹⁰⁷ has found that 3.3m people across the North of England (21.3% of the population) live in areas where there is a significant risk of transport-related social exclusion. These include former manufacturing and mining areas, places on the edge of cities, smaller cities and towns and coastal communities. Some new work for Transport Scotland has showed in detail how, in the words of the study, “transport has the potential to exacerbate the hardship families were facing, as well as being a tool to draw upon as a way of alleviating poverty. For example, accessing employment or education”¹⁰⁸. Another study on transport poverty in Wales noted that Covid-19 and its response have exacerbated inequality in Wales and set out the importance of providing non-car access to jobs and services as a way to address this¹⁰⁹. Our 2020 report pointed out that this issue affects

some parts of the population more than others: young people in particular face more mobility barriers (especially the lack of affordable public transport) and the Transport for the North report noted that transport-related social exclusion has a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities and long term health conditions, who face extra costs and difficulties in getting around. Older people, who in many cases are unable to drive, face isolation and loneliness.

The Governments in the UK have adopted various schemes and measures to address transport-related social exclusion. The UK Government has focused on loneliness, and sees transport as one way to address this – it has funded pilot projects to explore how transport schemes can contribute to addressing loneliness¹¹⁰. More widely, it has included transport in its “levelling up” mission. The Levelling up White Paper noted the “significant variation in the quality of transport connectivity around the UK, which can affect economic and social outcomes”¹¹¹. It has set a headline target that “by 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing”. As noted in our 2020 report, It has set out an “inclusive transport strategy” to make the transport system more inclusive and better for disabled people, and has now published a National Disability Strategy¹¹² covering the whole of the UK, and with specific transport commitments within it.

The Scottish Government’s National Transport Strategy¹¹³, published in 2020, also has headline commitments to reducing inequalities, and to a transport system that provides “fair access to services, will be easy to use for all and will be affordable for all”. The Welsh Government’s “A New Wales Transport Strategy”¹¹⁴ (March 2021) also has commitments to “make transport services and infrastructure accessible and inclusive by aiming to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport” (it should be noted that the Welsh strategy is governed additionally by the “Well-being of Future Generations Act” of 2015).

Northern Ireland’s draft “Infrastructure 2050” investment strategy for Northern Ireland¹¹⁵ sets out some measures

104 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320224521_Forced_Car_Ownership_in_the_UK_and_Germany_Socio-Spatial_Patterns_and_Potential_Economic_Stress_Impacts

105 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/articles/behaviouralimpactsorisingautomotivefuelpricesonconsumerfueldemandukjuly2021toaugust2022/2022-09-02>

106 <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/media-policy/media-enquiries/news-details/2022/11/04/a-green-lining-how-soaring-fuel-costs-have-driven-motorists-to-greener-forms-of-transport>

107 <https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Transport-related-social-exclusion-in-the-North-of-England.pdf>

108 “Transport and Child Poverty Beyond the Pandemic”, McHardy and Robertson, the Poverty Alliance, May 2021 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/49932/transport-and-child-poverty-beyond-the-pandemic.pdf>

109 Making the Connection, Sustrans Cymru, January 2022, https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/10456/transportpovertypaper-sustrans_eng.pdf

110 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-transport-projects-to-help-tackle-loneliness>

111 Levelling Up White Paper, February 2022 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf

112 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy>, July 2021; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy/the-inclusive-transport-strategy-achieving-equal-access-for-disabled-people> updated November 2020

113 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf>

114 https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/lwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf

115 <https://isni.gov.uk/strategy/>

to improve public transport and also promote local services and development to reduce car dependence and the need to travel. The strategy however has little on tackling inequality and affordability issues for transport; its equality impact assessment¹¹⁶ notes a lack of data on the transport-related inequalities in Northern Ireland and recommends the Department for Infrastructure, Translink and others should commission research on this.

All of these initiatives are welcome, but the current issues with the cost of living, especially related to transport, will require a broader strategy to reduce dependence on petrol and diesel cars, through electric vehicles, better public transport and better options for active travel. Some of the ways to do this were set out in our 2020 report, and the Transport for the North report has set out some “principles of a socially inclusive transport system”. Options such as car sharing can also reduce travel costs for households – we return to this below.

Part of a more general strategy will require addressing planning, especially for housing. The way in which spatial planning in general, and new housing development in particular, is carried out in practice is still leading to car dependence. The 2020 report highlighted research on the transport impacts of new housing by Transport for New Homes; since then TfNH have produced further research on new housing developments¹¹⁷ in England showing that in general new housing is very car dependent, though the report does note some exceptions. As the report suggests, pressure on local authorities to meet targets for housebuilding set by the Government are resulting in housing developments being built away from public transport and without local services and facilities. This will add to social exclusion, especially with high fuel prices.

In the light of the cost of living crisis, UK Governments should review their transport and other policies and spending so as to tackle car dependence and transport-related social exclusion for different groups in society. This should encompass the affordability, accessibility and availability of public transport, land use planning, and further support for active travel and shared transport. Schemes, projects and measures in transport should be designed to reduce car dependence and transport-related social exclusion and those that increase it should not go ahead. This should be supported by the re-definition of the overarching goal of national transport policy to be to “increase equitable and sustainable access to goods, services, opportunities and other people”. This would follow the logic of Triple Access Planning (see section 4).

¹¹⁶ https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dof/infrastructure-2050-consultation-document/supporting_documents/Draft%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf January 2022
¹¹⁷ Building Car Dependency, Transport for New Homes 2022, https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Building-Car-Dependency-2022.pdf?utm_source=TfNH_website&utm_medium=website_pdf&utm_campaign=report_launch

Section 4 Devolution and divergence

This report is deliberately called the State of the Nations, because the TPS's aim is to reflect the state of transport and the different transport policies in the four UK nations and in different local areas. Since the 2020 report, there has been an increasing divergence between the UK

Government and the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There has also been a move towards more radical transport policies in different cities and local transport areas, which have been responding to air pollution and climate change in the way they approach transport.



Northern Ireland, where most public transport is publicly owned, has seen investment in recent years, such as the Belfast 'Glider' rapid transport system

First, though, we should note some areas where so far there has been consensus. As noted already, the UK Government has supported active travel in England and has also supported public transport, notably with the first ever national bus strategy, as well as with funding to keep services going through the Covid pandemic. This support for active travel and public transport is a common feature, with all the other nations having strategies to do the same.

However, there are also increasing policy differences between the different Governments in their approach to transport policy. This can be seen in three main areas:

Roads policy and transport funding: the UK Government is continuing a large scale programme of road building in England, especially on the strategic road network. The current Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) involves £24bn spending in the 2020-2025, with some very large projects including the A303 Stonehenge scheme and the Lower Thames Crossing, both of which involve tunnelling. It is also preparing for the next Road Investment Strategy, RIS3¹¹⁸, and there is already a pipeline of 32 schemes that may be built during that period¹¹⁹. It also has a programme of “large local major” road schemes and a “Major Road Network” programme for bigger local authority schemes. Sub-national transport bodies in England have generally been co-ordinating bids for these programmes¹²⁰.

By contrast, the Welsh Government has instituted an independent review of its inherited roads programme¹²¹. This review, being undertaken by an independent panel, is looking at 55 road schemes to see whether they are consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy and its ambitions to reduce carbon emissions and tackle the climate emergency. The Deputy First Minister for Wales has been clear that this is not about ending road investment but “ensuring that the focus and priority is on

- the avoidance of action which increases carbon emissions
- the reallocation of existing road space
- adaptation of existing road infrastructure to cope with climate change
- investment to maintain safety and serviceability of existing road networks
- the improvement of biodiversity alongside major transport routes”.

He added that “money saved by not building new roads will be used to improve existing infrastructure, helping to create new bus and cycle lanes that give people a meaningful alternative choice for travel”¹²². The Welsh Government has also legislated to make 20 mph the default speed limit on local roads¹²³.

There is a wider context in Wales – the “Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act”, already referred to, sets a different framework from other UK countries. The Act, which is overseen by a “Future Generations Commissioner”, “requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change”¹²⁴. The Commissioner has made transport a priority, and the website highlights some of the ways her intervention has made a difference to transport policy¹²⁵.

The Scottish Government has also changed the focus of its transport investment programme towards active travel and has increasingly emphasising local transport (trams and local rail) rather than new roads, notably in its draft Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)¹²⁶. This follows a deal between the Scottish National Party and the Green Party after the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections, which saw a scaling back of road investment and a commitment to increase spending on active travel up to 20% of the overall transport budget.

In Northern Ireland, there has been a major programme of road schemes; the consultation document “Infrastructure 2050”¹²⁷, published in January 2022, shows that in the last ten years £2.2bn has been invested in roads, out of a total of £14.9bn infrastructure spending (£811m was invested in public transport). The strategy notes a backlog of maintenance in infrastructure including roads and street lighting and implies a shift away from building new infrastructure towards maintaining what is already there. It says that “we will only build new infrastructure that we can afford to maintain, and consider not only the cost of construction but also the ongoing costs – much of which is revenue rather than capital expenditure – associated with operating and maintaining new assets”, though it does also highlight “the potential for further investment in cross-border strategic [road] networks” On top of this strategy, a suite of regional transport plans is intended to set out the framework for transport policy and

118 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-the-third-road-investment-strategy>, December 2021

119 <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/pipeline-of-possible-future-schemes/>

120 For example <https://www.highwaysmagazine.co.uk/TfN-submits-700m-proposals-for-National-Roads-Fund/5100> August 2019 lists Transport for the North's bids for 16 local road schemes

121 <https://gov.wales/roads-review>

122 <https://gov.wales/written-statement-roads-review-initial-report-and-north-wales-transport-commission-a55-j14-16> 10 February 2022

123 <https://gov.wales/introducing-20mph-speed-limits>

124 <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

125 https://www.futuregenerations.wales/priority_areas/transport/

126 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/summary-report-january-2022-stpr2/>

127 <https://isni.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Infrastructure-2050-draft-Investment-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-FINAL.pdf>

investment decisions up to 2035¹²⁸ and as noted already there is an “All-Island Strategic Rail Review”¹²⁹ looking at options for developing the rail network for the whole island of Ireland.

The 2020 report suggested that “significant funding in all countries is still going on major road projects, and this appears to run counter to published transport objectives and strategies”, though it does reflect the large proportion of trips and mileage on roads. However, it should be noted that while there has been funding to build new roads, maintenance of existing roads and bridges is significantly underfunded, especially on local authority roads. The 2022 annual survey by the Asphalt Industry Alliance estimates that the cost of bringing the local authority road networks in England and Wales up to scratch is £12.64bn, an increase of 23%, with 18% of the network is structurally poor¹³⁰. The RAC Foundation has found that the number of substandard road bridges is increasing and a few have partially collapsed; the cost of clearing the backlog here is estimated at £5.44bn¹³¹. In London, one effect of the TfL budget settlement (see above) is severe underfunding of road maintenance and asset management by the London boroughs, which receive no direct central Government funding¹³². A 2019 report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office identified a £1.2bn backlog in road maintenance there and as noted already the “Infrastructure 2050” strategy gives much greater priority to maintaining existing roads.

Without a long term funding settlement that addresses this, the situation will worsen, especially with the more intense and extreme weather events resulting from global heating. Worsening road conditions and reduced resilience have significant economic impacts, on local communities and nationally¹³³.

Given the economic and social costs of poor maintenance, greater priority in roads and transport spending should be given to maintaining existing roads, bridges and pavements, including local authority roads, and increasing their resilience to extreme weather events, as against major new road projects. The move by the Welsh Government to formally review its inherited roads programme should be followed by the other UK nations, so as to ensure their transport investment supports rather than undermines their decarbonisation plans and supports biodiversity. In particular, the

next Road Investment Strategy in England should be reframed and the management of the strategic road network recast to focus on optimisation rather than expansion, so as to support national, regional and local commitments to decarbonise transport. National Highways’ role should be redefined as being a network operator and maintainer and they should be tasked with supporting moves to increase vehicle occupancy, the “commute zero” initiative and other measures in the TDP. There is new evidence¹³⁴ that the carbon emissions during the construction of new roads can be substantial; construction emissions should be automatically included in calculating carbon emissions from transport projects and reducing these should be part of new National Policy Statements and road investment strategies. The revised National Policy Statement for National Networks, promised in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, should actively promote schemes that reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity. .

Planning policy: Our 2020 report argued that “new planning and devolution/local government plans in each country should promote integrated transport and spatial planning so as to reduce the need to travel and help tackle climate change and social exclusion”. However, we noted above that current spatial planning in England, especially with new housing, tends to embed car dependence. The system at present remains focused on supporting numbers of new houses, through requirements for five-year housing land supplies for each local authority, with limited or no linkage to transport planning. The current National Planning Policy Framework makes it difficult to refuse new development on transport grounds, since refusal has to show that “the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe”¹³⁵ and this is difficult to show for any individual development. Reforms have been promised to the planning system in England, though with the new UK Government it is unclear what will happen.

By contrast, the policies and strategies in the other three UK nations have in the last two years integrated transport and spatial planning more closely. New planning policies in Scotland and Wales aim to focus new development around public transport. “Future Wales: the National Plan 2040”¹³⁶, published in February 2021, prioritises growth in existing urban areas, with higher density development,

128 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/transport-planning-2020-2035>

129 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-paper-all-island-strategic-rail-review>

130 <https://www.asphaltuk.org/wp-content/uploads/ALARM-survey-2022-FINAL.pdf>

131 <https://www.racfoundation.org/media-centre/number-of-substandard-road-bridges-on-the-rise> (note that this covers England, Scotland and Wales)

132 <https://highways-news.com/cost-of-londons-road-maintenance-backlog-has-now-reached-1-billion-says-lotags-state-of-the-city-report/>

133 The resilience challenge is well set out in a joint report by DfT and the Local Government Technical Advisers Group on emergency preparedness, response and recovery, published November 2021 - <https://lcrig.org.uk/news/highway-sector-resilience-report-launched>, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033573/lessons-learned-highway-sector-extreme-weather.pdf

134 <https://decarbon8.org.uk/embodiedemissions/> February 2022

135 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf para 111.

136 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/future-wales-the-national-plan-2040.pdf>

a mix of uses, a “town centre first” approach, “directing facilities and services to where intended users can easily walk, cycle and/or use public transport to access them” (policy 6). This has been supplemented by a “smarter working” policy¹³⁷, with an ambition to see 30% of the workforce in Wales working remotely on a regular basis. The Welsh strategy is integrated with the new Welsh Transport Strategy¹³⁸, whose first priority is “to bring services to people in order to reduce the need to travel”. In addition, four “corporate joint committees” have been established to develop regional transport and development plans; local authority transport planning duties have been transferred to these committees.

In Scotland, the draft National Planning Framework 4¹³⁹, published in November 2021, has a number of overarching principles, including “compact growth” - limiting urban expansion and increasing the density of settlements so as to “reduce the need to travel unsustainably” - and “local living” – networks of 20 minute neighbourhoods to “support local liveability, reduce the need to travel unsustainably, promote and facilitate walking and cycling” and improve access to services.

Northern Ireland is, as noted above, drawing up a new suite of four transport plans, setting out the framework for transport policy and investment decisions up until 2035. This process is being carried out in parallel to the Local Development Plan process; the Department of Infrastructure in Northern Ireland says that “the integration of land-use and transport planning processes provides a unique opportunity to combine the shared regional and local ambitions which are set out in the Programme for Government and also in the Councils’ Community and Local Development Plans”¹⁴⁰. The “Infrastructure 2050” draft strategy, referred to above, also commits to a “town centre first” strategy and highlights the “15 minute city” as an aspiration. The Department for Infrastructure recently outlined its ongoing commitment to integrated land use and transport planning¹⁴¹.

This is not in any way to suggest that car-based development is being ruled out in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. All three countries have seen such development, sometimes with major impacts on town centre prosperity and increased car dependence. In Northern Ireland, a study found that there is a problem with a large number of single one-off dwellings being approved in the countryside, and recommended a more sustainable rural development model¹⁴².

However, at least these Governments are seeking to address this issue. In England, despite warm words in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan about the need to link transport and spatial planning and about 20 minute neighbourhoods, in practice there has been little progress towards integration. In the city regions there has been some progress, for example (as noted in our 2020 report) in London the Mayor’s Transport Strategy and the London Plan are required to be in conformity under the GLA Act 1999. There are moves to spatial plans in Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region¹⁴³, but outside these the situation remains poorly co-ordinated as we described in the 2020 report. This has major economic as well as social and environmental impacts; new car-based housing on greenfield sites or alongside villages and market towns, christened “cowpat developments” by Transport for New Homes, add to traffic and congestion on local roads. Some progress is being made; the new body Active Travel England, now being established, will be a statutory consultee in the planning system and review active travel provision in major planning applications¹⁴⁴, but it is unclear whether the new Great British Railways body (see below) will have a similar role.

The moves to integrate transport and spatial planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are welcome, but need to be followed through, monitored and evaluated. In England, planning reform needs to encompass a revised National Planning Policy Framework and give priority to development built around existing or new public transport, with good local facilities and services that can be reached easily on foot or bike. The moves to “15/20 minute neighbourhoods” are welcome but the concept and framework needs to be clearly defined. The role of Active Travel England as a statutory consultee in the English planning system is very welcome; the new Great British Railways body, when established, should be given a similar status and role. Planning policy should also ensure that new bus facilities and services are properly planned for as part of new developments.

Public transport operations: public transport in England, Scotland and Wales was privatised in the 1980s and 1990s. Buses outside London were deregulated and privatised under the 1985 Transport Act, and rail services were privatised under the 1993 Railways Act. There has now been a general recognition that these measures

137 <https://gov.wales/smarter-working-remote-working-strategy-wales-html> 25 March 2022

138 https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/lwbyr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf May 2021

139 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/consultation-paper/2021/11/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework-draft/documents/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework/govscot%3Adocument/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework.pdf>

140 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/transport-planning-2020-2035>

141 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/planning-for-the-future-of-transport-time-for-change.pdf> 3 June 2021

142 “Forum for a Better Housing Market https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/476701/Forum-for-a-Better-Housing-Market-NI-Report.pdf

143 <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/>; <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/spatial-planning/>

144 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/active-travel-england-framework-document> 21 July 2022

went too far. The Government passed the Bus Services Act in 2017 which allows authorities in England more control over their bus networks. As already noted, it has also produced a new rail strategy, the Williams-Shapps plan for rail¹⁴⁵, which proposes to bring the railways back together under a new "Great British Railways" organisation. GBR will produce long term plans for the railways; it will let contracts for running passenger services and promote railfreight. Legislation to give effect to this is supposed to come in a new Transport Bill¹⁴⁶ (though as noted this has been delayed and the future of rail reform is unclear).

However, these represent significant changes. The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, has, after a lot of consultation and some legal challenges, won the right to implement bus franchising in the conurbation, starting in 2023 and moving in effect to the London model where Transport for Greater Manchester will decide on routes and fares and then let contracts for running the services. Other Mayors have indicated that they want to follow suit. Elsewhere, councils are implementing "enhanced partnerships", which will leave decisions on fares and routes with operators but give councils more say in these (as noted above, only some authorities have been given Bus Service Improvement Plan funding that was supposed to support these moves). Cornwall Council has been able use these powers to create an integrated public transport network in the county, with the reduced fares already noted¹⁴⁷.

Wales and Scotland have both gone further; both countries have taken the rail operators there into public ownership. Transport for Wales took over the rail services in Wales from February 2021, and Scotrail went into public ownership from 1 April 2022. Transport for Wales also took over the infrastructure on the "Core Valley Lines" from Network Rail in April 2020, as part of a major "South Wales Metro" upgrade and electrification.

Both countries are also planning to allow local authorities to run their own bus services. In Scotland provision for this was made in the Transport Scotland Act 2019, along with moves to enable franchising and partnerships akin to England. The Welsh Government is also allowing local authorities to create new municipal bus companies but is proposing to go further, by requiring the franchising of all bus services in Wales¹⁴⁸.

In Northern Ireland, most public transport is already publicly owned, and this has not changed (there are

some small private bus operators). Services are provided by Translink (formally the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company). Northern Ireland has seen significant investment in public transport in recent years, notably in the "Glider" bus rapid transport system in Belfast. with a second phase under development through the Belfast City Region Deal. As already noted, there is an All-Island Strategic Rail Review currently underway looking at options for rail development.

The Transport Planning Society does not take a position for or against public ownership of public transport. However, the model of deregulation of buses in Britain has made it difficult for local transport authorities to plan transport and to link bus services to new developments. As recommended above, the Government's rail reforms should enable more local control over local rail services (as the Urban Transport Group has pointed out, the existing devolved services such as London Overground and Merseyrail have been a success¹⁴⁹).

The moves towards giving transport authorities more powers over bus services and towards better planning for public transport and the new Great British Railways are welcome. However, given the intense economic problems facing public transport outlined in section 2, the powers should be accompanied by more funding for bus services and by support for authorities giving priority to buses and linking buses and trains to new developments.

Cutting traffic: towards a National Transport Strategy:

As already noted, these divergences and different approaches to transport policy by the different UK nations and by different authorities are reflected in overarching policy, with devolved authorities and city-regions committed to targets for traffic reduction targets and increases in the use and mode share of public transport and active travel, which are not yet policy at UK level. There has been significant work underpinning these targets, setting out what measures might be taken to meet them¹⁵⁰.

A major divergence here is that whereas Scotland and Wales have national transport strategies, and Northern Ireland is edging towards one, there is no national transport strategy for England or for the UK as a whole. It can be argued that the suite of policy documents already noted – the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the national bus strategy, the Williams-Shapps rail plan, the "Gear Change" active travel strategy, the inclusive transport

¹⁴⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994603/gbr-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail.pdf May 2021

¹⁴⁶ Consultation on the proposed railways legislation is at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082519/williams-shapps-plan-for-rail-consultation-on-legislation-to-implement-rail-transformation-web-version.pdf

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.transportforcornwall.co.uk/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2022/3/4/1648713506/one-network-one-timetable-one-ticket-planning-buses-public-service-wales.pdf>; <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-03/bws-cymru-connecting-people-with-places.pdf> 31 March 2022

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/regional-and-urban-rail/case-devolution-urban-and-regional-rail>

¹⁵⁰ For London, see https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/nz2030_element_energy_final.pdf, January 2022; For Scotland see <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>. For Wales see <https://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/policyresearch/transportandclimatechange/>

strategy – together form a national transport strategy, but in practice much transport policy is, as our 2020 report said, still operating in silos.

As noted above the Transport Decarbonisation Plan promised a new generation of Local Transport Plans in England, with “quantifiable carbon reductions” as a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding. Since then the Government has produced a toolkit to help authorities with these measures¹⁵¹; guidance on the plans is still awaited but some detail has been given to councils.

Given the challenges and uncertainties facing transport, there is a case for a new approach to transport policy and planning, reducing the physical need for transport whilst maintaining access. One approach to this is the concept of “Triple Access Planning”. Professor Glenn Lyons of the University of the West of England, a key exponent of this, has described Triple Access Planning as “recognising, understanding and shaping the world in which we live – a world in which there are three means to access people, goods, jobs, services and opportunities: physical mobility (transport system), spatial proximity (land use system) and digital connectivity (telecommunications system)”¹⁵². As we have seen, these three areas are connected, especially with the rise in hybrid working and home shopping, enabled by digital connectivity and with digital access being a substitute for physical mobility. We have already noted the importance of linking spatial planning to transport; but digital communication is dealt with and considered entirely separately in Government (though it should be noted that in Finland these are brought together in the “Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications”¹⁵³). As the pandemic has shown, digital connectivity can also provide resilience, but there is an important caveat: total reliance on digital access carries the risk of excluding parts of the population. For example, although 99% of adults aged 16 to 44 years in the UK were recent internet users in 2020, this figure dropped to 54% for adults aged 75 years and over, and 6.3% of adults in the UK had never used the internet¹⁵⁴.

The UK Government should develop a national transport strategy, drawing together its various strategies and policies, and including quantified targets to support the ambitions in its plans and policies such as the Decarbonisation Plan, including reductions in vehicle mileage in England. The overarching goal of this strategy should be

to increase equitable and sustainable access to goods, services, opportunities and other people; it should be linked to spatial planning, including a revised National Planning Policy Framework and should support the new generation of Local Transport Plans. Governments should also seek to integrate digital telecommunications policies into transport strategies and the UK Government should consider ways of bringing transport policy, spatial planning and digital communications policies together including through joint units or even a combined department and to maximise accessibility for all. The Triple Access Planning approach is one way to do this.

Reducing car mileage is sometimes seen as very difficult, technically and politically. The examples of Scotland and Wales, however, show that this can be a technically and politically credible goal. This suggests there are a lot of opportunities at UK level. Apart from improved and more affordable public transport, using the tools mentioned above, and increased active travel, they include:

- Increased vehicle occupancy – current vehicle occupancy in the UK is low, so even small increases in average occupancy could result in significant reductions in car mileage¹⁵⁵.
- Travel plans at workplaces, schools and other places generating travel¹⁵⁶
- New mobility options – bike-share, e-scooters, car clubs, cargo bikes, and types of car sharing¹⁵⁷
- Mobility or community hubs, bringing different transport provision together¹⁵⁸
- Managing traffic in National Parks and other areas with high levels of tourism¹⁵⁹

We have already highlighted the importance of improved spatial planning, moving away from car dependent development and reducing the need for motorised travel, and this must be an important part of any strategy to reduce traffic.

There is sometimes a view that it's not possible to tackle or reduce car use outside cities. However, there are examples of good alternatives to single-occupancy car travel in many rural areas. Cornwall has already been mentioned, and there are other examples, including the new mobility options and increased car sharing, especially

151 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transport-decarbonisation-local-authority-toolkit> 13 April 2022

152 <https://www.tapforuncertainty.eu/author/lyons/>

153 <https://www.lvm.fi/en/home>

154 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2020>).

155 <https://liftshare.com/uk>; <https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/where-now-where-next/> “Shared Mobility – Where now, Where next?” Second Report of the Commission on Travel Demand, 17 September 2019

156 <https://www.mobilityways.com/>; <https://modeshift.org.uk/>

157 <https://www.como.org.uk/>

158 <https://www.como.org.uk/mobility-hubs/overview-and-benefits#:~:text=What%20are%20Mobility%20Hubs%3F,where%20relevant%20enhanced%20community%20facilities.>

159 <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/parking-review/news/71320/peak-parking-the-view-from-snowdonia> 8 June 2022

for journeys to work – which can save commuters money¹⁶⁰. In Northern Ireland, there are park and share sites, alongside park and ride, where commuters can meet and share cars for journeys into cities¹⁶¹.



HertsLynx' service in North Hertfordshire serves villages without any bus service

There are now many examples of demand responsive transport services¹⁶², though it has been argued that new forms of regulation are needed to maximise and network these¹⁶³. Wales has invested heavily in the TrawsCymru long distance bus network¹⁶⁴, in local dial a ride “Bwcabus” services and now in flexible services, “Fflecsi”¹⁶⁵. The Highlands of Scotland have a “Mobility as a Service app, Go-Hi”¹⁶⁶.

The University of Hertfordshire ran a series of roundtables in 2020 on “the future of transport outside cities”¹⁶⁷, which drew together papers and case studies, and has recently run a further set, the report for which will be available at the end of the year. The Department of Transport is planning to produce a “Future of Transport: Rural Strategy” early in 2023¹⁶⁸, drawing on these. The roundtables have highlighted the range of work being done already to improve transport options outside cities. The Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport sub-national bodies have produced a comprehensive South West Rural Mobility Strategy, which proposes a wide range of measures to support rural mobility and access¹⁶⁹. Like the Triple Access Planning approach,

this emphasises spatial planning, reducing the need to travel through better local services and better digital connectivity, as well as transport improvements.

There has also been new work on transport for suburban areas – a report from the Urban Transport Group¹⁷⁰ has suggested four “foundations” for transport in suburbs:

- Help people access more of what they need locally
- Provide family-friendly sustainable transport choices including school streets, low traffic neighbourhoods and e-cargo bikes
- Prioritise “gentle densification” around sustainable transport infrastructure
- Provide reliable, convenient connections to the nearest town or city and key employment sites.

The report has some detail and case studies on what these foundations might mean in practice; they link to many of the ideas set out elsewhere in this report.

This all suggests that every authority and type of area, urban, suburban and rural, can find ways to tackle single-occupancy car use and give people good alternatives and a range of options. There is a fear among politicians that the public will reject such plans; in fact research has shown that there are packages of measures that can win people over, including those on low incomes¹⁷¹.

However, there is a consensus that measures to manage traffic and parking - “demand management” in the transport planning jargon – have to form part of any package of measures to tackle transport issues. Whether this is priority for buses, trams, cycles or pedestrians, charging for car parking, reducing or banning parking at particular times, or in some cases simply enforcing existing laws and regulation such as speed limits, measures that make it easier and quicker to use public transport, walk or cycle and give priority to those over car traffic will be needed as part of packages to reduce carbon emissions and congestion and improve air quality. However, there is an increasing focus on charging for road use as part of these strategies, and this is covered in the next section.

As noted above, the UK Government has given local authorities in England more powers to manage traffic, as

160 <https://www.mobilityways.com/insights/cost-of-living-and-commuter-trends/>

161 <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/park-and-share-or-park-and-ride>

162 Beate Kubitz in <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57535cc1b09f95345f7e8fa7/t/5fc565c461e25426e1ed459a/1606772181781/Smart+Transport+8+-+DRT.pdf> has a good survey of the different options here

163 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57535cc1b09f95345f7e8fa7/t/62db9f673b58083eb701fb30/1658560361320/PT268p24-25.pdf>

164 <https://www.trawscymru.info/>

165 <https://bwcabus.traveline-cymru.info/>; <https://www.fflecsi.wales/>

166 <https://gohi.app/>

167 https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/339397/1107-UH-Roundtable-Report_P5.pdf

168 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1017933/future-of-transport-rural-strategy-call-for-evidence-summary-of-responses.pdf

169 <https://westerngatewaystb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/20220330-WG-PT-Rural-Mobility-Strategy-Final-Draft-Strategy-v1-1-Compressed-002.pdf>

170 <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/reports/good-life-role-transport-shaping-new-and-sustainable-era-suburbs> July 2022

171 <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/fairly-reducing-car-use-in-scottish-cities>, July 2022; <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/all-aboard> 23 June 2021



part of the “Gear Change” active travel strategy and the national bus strategy. In particular, it has given powers to authorities outside London to enforce decriminalised “moving traffic offences” (illegal right turns, driving into bus lanes etc)¹⁷² – previously enforcement was a matter for the police. This could be very significant. As well as better compliance with existing measures, including speed limits on residential roads, this represents an opportunity for councils to implement much smarter traffic management provision without requiring police enforcement, and allows the tailoring of traffic restraint measures to be more locally acceptable and more likely to win political support.

Governments should support local authorities and communities in taking action to reduce traffic and to decarbonise transport. They should require local authorities to produce local transport plans, linked to local development plans, and with quantified carbon reduction pathways at their heart, and fund them accordingly. Governments should actively fund pilots in different types of communities and spread information on these. Councils in England should make use of the new decriminalised traffic enforcement powers to develop smarter traffic management measures that help reduce road danger and support decarbonisation.

¹⁷² <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/councils-in-england-to-get-new-powers-over-traffic-offences/>

Section 5 Transport spending and taxation

The 2020 report listed the very wide range of sources of Government funding for transport, especially in England. It pointed out that funding for transport tended to be in silos for particular modes, and that there were a lot of different funds that local authorities were required to bid for.

Since then, as we noted in section 2, the Government has put in a lot of money to keep public transport going through the pandemic, and has also put funding into Bus Service Improvement Plans and active travel schemes, with firm central direction on the quality of the services and schemes that are being funded. We noted in section 3 that significant funds were still being spent on big road schemes.

New sources of transport funds have also appeared. These include:

- **Covid recovery funding:** many local authorities received Government funding to support their areas recover from the pandemic. These have funded some transport projects, including the free public transport fares for Herefordshire mentioned in section 3.
- **The Levelling Up Fund**, launched in March 2021, includes “upgrading local transport” as one of the elements that it funds. The first round, worth £4.8bn, funded a number of active travel and other transport projects¹⁷³. The second round, launched in July 2022, includes “transport investments” as one of its three main areas (the others are “regeneration and town centre investment” and “Cultural investment”). Bids are required to be aligned to and support net zero goals.
- **The Towns Fund**¹⁷⁴, launched in July 2019, has funded a number of active travel schemes as part of wider regeneration programmes, and also some public transport schemes

- **The Future High Streets Fund**¹⁷⁵ has funded a number of town centre and active travel transport schemes, including for example a new public transport hub in Swindon
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**¹⁷⁶: this will replace the EU “structural funds”. It was launched in April 2022; its prospectus includes support for active travel under the “communities and place” theme.

These are all useful funds, but they all require time and effort on the part of local authorities to prepare bids, which is dependent on scarce revenue funding, and the system will reward those best resourced and best able to write those bids. The National Infrastructure Commission has criticised this; in a report on levelling up funding¹⁷⁷, it recommended that “the current array of around 15 funding streams for local transport [in England] are streamlined into just two – a ‘dual track’ approach of devolved, flexible budgets based on population and local network size, and a targeted scheme to help areas with poor transport connections or where new industries could spring up”. It proposed that local authorities should be enabled by the Government to spend up to £6 billion per year on transport investment over five years.

The Government has taken notice of this and previous NIC proposals in this area. The Transforming Cities Fund, mentioned in our 2020 report, has become the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). This is offering the city regions £5.7bn capital investment in local transport networks over five years¹⁷⁸. Although detailed delivery plans have had to be agreed, the CRSTS represents a move away from the annual bidding for small sums of funding that English local authorities have had to go through.

For authorities outside city regions, the funding picture is still difficult, and, as we noted in 2020, much of the transport funding is focused on capital investment projects; revenue funding to support services and staff is still very limited. This exacerbates the challenge of a competitive and bid-based funding process, as noted above.

¹⁷³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-first-round-successful-bidders>

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/towns-fund>

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/future-high-streets-fund>

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

¹⁷⁷ <https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/infrastructure-towns-and-regeneration/infrastructure-towns-regeneration-final-report/> 23 September 2021

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/city-region-sustainable-transport-settlements-confirmed-delivery-plans-and-funding-allocations>

As noted, many of the new funds are UK wide. The different Governments also have their own funding programmes and our 2020 report listed the different funds available in Scotland and Wales for transport.

In Scotland, the transport project priorities are in the Strategic Transport Projects Review, which as noted already has been revised with a greater emphasis on local mass transport schemes and links to islands. New funds have been announced for e-car clubs and used electric vehicles¹⁷⁹, domestic charging for EVs¹⁸⁰, active travel¹⁸¹, road safety¹⁸² and zero emission buses¹⁸³.

In Wales, the list of different transport funds is set out in the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan project pipeline and in the National Transport Delivery Plan 2022-27, published July 2022¹⁸⁴. The 2021 pipeline noted that “Decisions on future infrastructure will be undertaken by using the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy which prioritises investments in sustainable modes. Achieving our decarbonisation targets will be at the heart of decision making for infrastructure developments”¹⁸⁵. In addition, the Government provides transport grants to local authorities for active travel, local transport (including roads and bus infrastructure), ultra-low emission vehicle infrastructure and road safety. Other Welsh Government budgets, including for regeneration, transforming towns, air quality and ultra-low emission vehicles, go to transport networks.

In Northern Ireland, as already noted, a draft infrastructure investment strategy, “Infrastructure 2050”, was published in January 2022 for consultation, and this is to be followed by a rolling 10 year infrastructure investment programme. The nature of the devolved administration and of local government in Northern Ireland mean that there are fewer individual funding streams and the 11 councils have a minor role in managing the transport network (for example, as noted above, public transport is funded directly by the Government through Translink, which is publicly owned, and “DfI Roads” is the Road Authority in Northern Ireland responsible for all public roads). However, councils have had funding for smaller scale active travel schemes and “greenways”¹⁸⁶, as part of a £20m “Blue Green Fund”¹⁸⁷ launched in June 2020.

The UK Government’s different funds for transport are welcome but are also complex and confusing and bidding for them requires significant funding and staff time by local authorities, and as noted in section 4, are dwarfed by the funding going to major road and rail schemes. The Government should heed the advice from the National Infrastructure Commission to streamline the funding streams for local transport and give local authorities multi-year transport funding settlements, akin to those on the national roads and the rail network. These settlements should cover revenue support for staff and for services including public transport, as well as for capital investment and for asset maintenance and renewal. The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements are a good start in this direction, and this approach should be rolled out more generally. In England the new Local Transport Plans system will provide an opportunity to do this. In general, transport funding should be linked to clear social, economic and environmental objectives and justified accordingly, and, as noted in section 4, should also be linked to local plans and other spatial planning policies. As we noted in our 2020 report, this approach is established by the GLA Act in London and works well¹⁸⁸.

Transport taxation and charging

Our 2020 report noted the range of transport taxes and said that “with the commitment to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles, the Government will lose much of its income from motoring taxes”; it suggested that this could be an opportunity to review future ways to charge for vehicle ownership and use. Since then, the Government has made a firm commitment to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030, and as the Transport Select Committee has pointed out, this means that Treasury revenue from motoring taxation will decrease, because electric vehicles currently do not pay fuel duty or excise duty. In its January 2022 report, the Committee urged the Government to act now to replace fuel and vehicle excise duties with a road pricing system based on miles travelled and vehicle type¹⁸⁹.

179 <https://transportscotland-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/gbp-30-million-to-support-the-shift-to-zero-emission-transport> , & June 2022

180 <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/grants-and-loans/domestic-charge-point-funding/>

181 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/active-travel/active-travel-funding-opportunities/>

182 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/road-safety-funding/> 23 March 2022

183 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/buses/scottish-zero-emission-bus-challenge-fund/#:~:text=The%20aim%20of%20the%20Scottish,create%20sustainable%20and%20inclusive%20growth.>

184 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-07/national-transport-delivery-plan-2022-to-2027.pdf>

185 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/wales-infrastructure-investment-plan-project-pipeline-2021.pdf>

186 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/odowd-announces-funding-councils-greenway-development> 6 July 2022

187 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/mallon-announces-budget-aid-economy-kick-start-and-community-transformation>

188 Under the GLA Act, the London Boroughs have a legal duty to prepare a Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which sets out how each borough will deliver the Mayor’s Transport Strategy (MTS) in their area. The Mayor approves the Boroughs’ LIPs and TfL allocates funding to the boroughs to support delivery of the projects and programmes in their approved LIPs. The LIPs also align with the Boroughs’ local development plans, which are in turn in conformity with the London Plan, which is itself aligned to the MTS.

189 <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8754/documents/88692/default/> 25 January 2022



The Climate Change Committee's latest report to Parliament has similarly concluded that the *"biggest policy shortfalls in the surface transport sector are on the demand side"* and that *"it will be necessary for the UK to introduce some form of road pricing to fill the fiscal hole that will be left by the erosion of fuel duty and to prevent the low costs of electric vehicles leading to increased congestion¹⁹⁰".*

A number of other commentators have made the same point. The Social Market Foundation, in a May 2022 report¹⁹¹, said that sticking to the status quo is not tenable, and if EVs continue to pay limited taxation, congestion will increase.. It also said that fuel duty is a regressive tax now, but will become more regressive if it is increased while EVs remain untaxed. It too recommended road pricing, and had some opinion survey work to show that this would have public support. The SMF is proposing a simple flat per mile road pricing scheme, with a free mileage allowance, complemented by localised congestion charging in cities. A Policy Exchange report in February 2022¹⁹² suggested that road pricing could improve the lives of drivers as well as commanding public support. A new report from the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) has looked in detail at public responses to road pricing and concludes that a road pricing scheme could command public support¹⁹³.

One point CBT and other commentators have made is that electric vehicles are currently exempt from taxation and this therefore is giving them a free ride. Yet it has been pointed out that EVs still have negative impacts; as well as congestion they contribute to road deaths and injuries, community severance and air pollution, with particulates from tyres and brakes¹⁹⁴. So there is a strong case for taxing their use.

The Government has not yet said anything about this, though in its November 2020 "10 point plan for a green industrial revolution", it did say: "we will need to ensure that the tax system encourages the uptake of EVs and that revenue from motoring taxes keeps pace with this change, to ensure we can continue to fund the first-class public services and infrastructure that people and families across the UK expect"¹⁹⁵.

Meanwhile, there are discussions on road pricing at a sub-national level. The Mayor of London has canvassed opinion on a move to a charging scheme in London, in the context of tackling air pollution. In the May 2022 consultation¹⁹⁶, the Mayor and Transport London proposed an expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone to the whole of London, but the consultation also asked for views on a road charging scheme in which existing charges would be scrapped and replaced by a single road use charging scheme. In Wales, an independent review on road user charging was published in November 2020¹⁹⁷, written by Derek Turner, who as Managing Director of Streets for Transport for London steered through the London congestion charging scheme. The Wales Transport Strategy made a commitment to "develop a framework for fair and equitable road-user charging in Wales"¹⁹⁸. The Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy delivery plan for 2022-23 says that as part of its programme to reduce car mileage by 20% by 2030, referred to in section 3 above, "we will undertake further exploration of options for demand management to discourage car use, including pricing.... The aim is to develop a new Car Demand Management Framework by 2025, which will take into account the needs of people in rural areas and island communities, as well as those on low incomes and people with protected characteristics"¹⁹⁹. Cambridge is also discussing a road user charge; the Greater Cambridge Partnership is consulting on a package of significant improvements in public transport and active travel provision, paid for by a road user charge in the city²⁰⁰.

190 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2022-progress-report-to-parliament/> June 2022

191 <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/miles-ahead-road-pricing/>

192 <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/a-new-deal-for-drivers/>

193 <https://bettertransport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/legacy-files/research-files/22.09.pay-as-you-drive-report.pdf>

194 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/23/electric-cars-transport-train-companies> George Monbiot, 23 September 2020

195 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution/title>

196 <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2022/may/tfl-seeks-views-on-expanding-world-leading-ulez-london-wide>

197 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/independent-review-road-user-charging-in-wales.pdf>

198 https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/llwybr-newydd-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy_0.pdf p21

199 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/51675/national-transport-strategy-nts2-second-delivery-plan-2022-2023.pdf> p18

200 <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/city-access-programme/making-connections>



The Scottish Government has funded electric car clubs - photo Teviot electric car club

As well as road charging, some areas are looking at workplace parking levies, following the example in Nottingham²⁰¹. Leicester City Council has consulted on introducing such a levy, though has decided not to go ahead with it for the moment²⁰² and Oxfordshire has been consulting on a levy for Oxford city²⁰³ as part of its “Central Oxfordshire Transport Plan”, which also involves traffic filters. Other cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow are looking at a levy scheme, with support from the Scottish Government, which has published guidance on this²⁰⁴.

Some of the Clean Air Zones involve charging some types of vehicle, including Bath, Portsmouth, Birmingham and Bristol. The Birmingham scheme, which started on 1 June 2021, charges £8 a day for cars, vans and taxis travelling within the middle ring road that do not meet emission standards, and £50 a day for coaches, buses and heavy goods vehicles. Its initial impact report²⁰⁵ found a reduction of nitrogen dioxide within the zone by 13% on pre Covid levels, and high levels of compliance. Bristol’s clean air zone, which includes a £9 charge for older and more polluting cars and vans, starts at the end of November 2022²⁰⁶. Other cities are bringing charges in the next year²⁰⁷. An initial proposal for a charging scheme in Greater Manchester proved controversial and has been withdrawn, with the mayor and combined authority arguing for a different approach²⁰⁸.

Our 2020 report noted the potential for funding new transport schemes by capturing some of the increase in land values that they will bring. This was the approach used to raise a significant proportion of the costs of the Elizabeth Line and Northern Line extension to Battersea Power Station in London. Since then, a land

value capture scheme has been developed to part-fund the reopening of the railway line to Ashington in Northumberland and the E-Rail consortium involved has developed other proposals to apply this²⁰⁹. They argue that this promotes denser and more sustainable development around stations and public transport.

Another potential source of funding for local transport used in other countries is a tourist levy, and the Scottish Government has announced it will introduce a “Local Visitor Levy Bill”; in the words of the First Minister, “this will help councils, if they so choose, to fund activities related to tourism and related infrastructure.” Edinburgh Council has long campaigned on this and is likely to take advantage of these powers²¹⁰.

Given that the move to electric vehicles will reduce revenue from fuel and vehicle taxes, the Government needs to start planning for an alternative. It should consult on options for road user charging, potentially replacing existing fuel and vehicle taxes, and support the devolved authorities and administrations in their work on this. Any move towards road user charging should involve extensive engagement with the public and with local authorities.

Our 2020 report said that, compared with other countries, UK local authorities do not have many powers to raise funding for transport, and do not make enough use of the powers they do have. Since then, we have seen more authorities starting to explore road charging and workplace parking levy powers, charging polluting vehicles in Clean Air Zones, and new options to fund public transport such as land value capture. This is welcome, but the UK Government should consider and experiment with new powers to allow devolved administrations and local authorities to raise money for transport measures, such as tourist levies and surcharges on local business and property taxes.

Governments and local authorities should use the tools available to capture the increase in land values to fund new public transport schemes, and should actively develop these methods and explore ways they can be extended.

201 <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/wpl>

202 <https://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/city-mayor-peter-soulsby/my-vision/connecting-leicester/workplace-parking-levy/>

203 [https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/core-transport-proposals#:~:text=A%20workplace%20parking%20levy%20\(WPL,road%2C%20would%20pay%20the%20WPL;https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/workplace-parking-levy](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/core-transport-proposals#:~:text=A%20workplace%20parking%20levy%20(WPL,road%2C%20would%20pay%20the%20WPL;https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/workplace-parking-levy)

204 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/empowering-local-authorities-to-tackle-climate-change/> 30 June 2022

205 <https://www.brumbreathes.co.uk/news/article/94/clean-air-zone-interim-provides-evidence-of-impact-on-air-pollution>

206 <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/streets-travel/bristols-caz>

207 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/driving-in-a-clean-air-zone> gives an up to date list of charges

208 <https://cleanairgm.com/>

209 <https://www.e-rail.co.uk/>

210 <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/national/20995327.edinburgh-first-uk-city-introduce-tourist-levy/> 7 September 2022

Section 6 New forms of decision-making

This report has highlighted the very big challenges faced by those overseeing transport planning and policy in the UK. The need to decarbonise the UK transport system requires, as noted, big changes in travel behaviour as well as in transport technology; to this has been added an economic crisis with severe impacts on the cost of living and the economy.

This means that “business as usual” is not an option, and this poses challenges both to the ways in which decisions about transport strategies, policies and schemes are made, and the ways these are communicated to the wider public and the public is involved in these decisions.

Section 3 noted the importance of putting increasing access, decarbonisation and tackling social exclusion at the centre of transport decision-making and the economic appraisal system used by all four UK nations in evaluating transport programmes and projects. This is challenging in itself; in addition, as we showed in section 2, all the governments in the UK have given increased priority to active travel and to public transport, and this, with the new funding going through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements and other funding streams, will see significant investment in these modes of transport and measures that give these priority over other transport modes.

Our 2020 report proposed various reforms to the transport appraisal system, moving towards an objectives-led process with more public engagement.



This includes reviewing “predict and provide” – assuming that observed past travel choice behaviours are the best predictors for future choice-making - as the basis for transport forecasts and economic appraisal of transport measures and schemes. This is more important given that past trends are unsustainable. An alternative approach, sometimes called “vision and validate”, has been endorsed in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and is likely to be the basis of the new Local Transport Plan framework. The International Transport Forum recommends broadening project appraisal to ensure its processes and practices take account of all transport policy objectives, and also to incorporate accessibility indicators to assess equity impacts²¹¹. Similar new approaches are being developed in the other nations, often driven by considerations of the needs for future as well as current generations of citizens²¹². To have real impact these should be applied in practice not just for new projects but also to inherited transport schemes such as those in the current Road Investment Strategy.

Governments should move further and faster to reform transport appraisal, so that it reflects the new realities and can genuinely help decision-makers. The Transport Planning Society and other professional bodies are already in dialogue with DfT and others on this, but more progress is needed.

A fundamental problem now facing the transport planning profession is the treatment of uncertainty. Given all the challenges arising now, planning for the future is increasingly difficult. Progress has been made: alternative transport scenarios have been built for South East Wales by the University of the West of England²¹³, Transport for the North uses a scenario approach to help design adaptive transport strategies²¹⁴ and Transport Scotland have used scenarios in their Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)²¹⁵. The Department for Transport has produced a toolkit for analysing and presenting information on future uncertainty in the transport system²¹⁶ as part of its Transport Appraisal Guidance. The South West Rural Mobility Strategy, referred to in section 4, uses scenarios as well, but these are based on household data, which are then used to tailor packages of measures for different types of communities. Our 2020 report recommended the use of scenarios rather than forecasts in decision-making, and although there has been progress here, these are not yet routine in transport decision-making across all levels of government, and more needs to be done to support decision-makers when faced with these uncertainties.

UK Governments, with the transport planning profession, should provide best-practice guidance on managing future uncertainty across all levels of government, including the development, use and interpretation of scenarios, building on the experience being built up by Transport for Wales, Transport Scotland, sub-national transport bodies in England and the Department for Transport.

Communicating and involving the public: as noted already, the challenges facing transport require big changes in the way people travel and access goods and services. These are challenging for many people and there are in some cases polarised opinions – for example there have as noted been public backlashes against low traffic neighbourhoods and clean air zones, with in some cases vandalism and violence against measures implemented. We recommended in section 2 that design for active travel schemes needs to be genuinely inclusive and help all users, but there is a need for more fundamental and detailed consideration of ways to involve communities in future transport strategies, policies and measures. New forms of decision-making, using tools such as “Commonplace” and assemblies, focus groups etc, allow a broader range of public involvement than traditional public consultation methods. A recent “Street Voice” project in Oxford has used the “citizen’s jury” approach “to find common ground on solutions to the impact of travel on health and climate change”²¹⁷.

It should be noted that, partly due to funding deadlines, the way in which some of the emergency traffic schemes were implemented during Covid did not meet the principles of public and stakeholder engagement and as a result some schemes went forward which local input could have improved or redesigned. The whole ethos of the transport planning skills work is to ensure that there is breadth and mode neutrality and a holistic evidence based approach. **The TPS and others should emphasise the necessity of engagement with stakeholders and the public in skills development and transport qualifications.**

If local schemes that change the layout and design of streets, and give cars and other motorised road traffic lower priority on the roads, have raised antagonism, there will be bigger reactions to changes in the way road use is paid for. Section 5 argues for moves towards road user charging; this has long been discussed in transport policy circles, but less attention has been given to ways to communicate and discuss such changes. Previous

211 <https://www.itf-oecd.org/broadening-transport-appraisal>

212 https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-08/welsh-transport-appraisal-guidance-weltag-2022_0.pdf

213 <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/862023/alternative-transport-scenarios-for-south-east-wales-building-for-a-sustainable-transport-future>

214 <https://transportforthenorth.com/future-travel-scenarios>

215 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/50900/appendix-f-scenario-definitions-and-purpose-draft-technical-report-stpr2.pdf>

216 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tag-uncertainty-toolkit#:~:text=TAG%20provides%20information%20on%20the,to%20support%20a%20business%20case.&text=Forthcoming%20change%20to%20guidance%20note,be%20made%20in%20November%202022.&text=First%20published>

217 <https://www.gchu.org.uk/street-voice/>

attempts at this have led to national and local backlashes, notably a huge petition in 2007 against a national scheme²¹⁸ and defeats for local charging schemes in referenda in Manchester in 2008 and Edinburgh in 2005 (the effect of this defeat in Manchester influenced resistance to a Clean Air Zone charging scheme in 2022).

There are professionals and organisations with considerable experience in involving people in transport²¹⁹; **the TPS and others should involve them and others in helping and giving guidance to transport planners and policy-makers on ways to communicate with and involve people in transport decision-making.**

Transport Planning skills and Professional Development

TPS delivers the Transport Planning Professional qualification (**TPP**) in partnership with the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT). This is now chartered: **CTPP**. We also run the TPS Professional Development Scheme (PDS) which is completed through professional review and meets the knowledge requirements of the TPP. It offers its own intermediate qualification: Incorporated Transport Planner, **IncTP**.

As in many areas of work a shortage of skilled transport planners became evident during and after the Covid restrictions. The need to implement emergency Covid measures became embroiled in a range of other issues which are discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report. As a more normal pattern of work returns the skills shortage is evident and employers have resumed graduate recruitment and strongly supported the transport planning apprenticeships. The TPS Professional Development Scheme (PDS) has also grown with annual completions into double figures and trainees around 400, the technician apprenticeship is back to an intake of over 40 a year and the degree apprenticeship to over 25. This is very encouraging but of course needs time to produce fully rounded transport planners. What is positive about the PDS and apprenticeships is that people can work and obtain structured learning at the same time.

The professional and educational bodies are aware that this has its risks – people become specialised too early and that can lead to bias in problem analysis and the creation of effective options to solve them. Breadth of knowledge and understanding is one of the key aspects of transport planning and is a key focus for our skills work. Recent changes to the PDS and TPP have emphasised the need for constructive challenge in our transport work, and for the uncertainty inherent in much of our forecasting and appraisal to be made transparent to everyone involved, including the public.

Most recently TPS has been involved in the creation of a more specific transport planning technician qualification, **TPTech**. This will be offered from 2023 and TPS has now become regulated by Ofqual for the purpose of delivering it for apprentices. It will complete the range of qualifications available for transport planners. A further aspect TPS work in this area is the inclusion of local authorities in professional development. We are currently piloting a consortium approach and TPtech for existing technicians with them.

As well as this we have been piloting both the PDS and TPP outside the UK and this has resulted in a branch of the TPS being set up in New Zealand this year (2022). A cohort of senior TPPs is expected to qualify early in 2023 who will go on to mentor their peer group. While skills recognition was important to them, the creation of a professional home for transport planners was a key motivation. The PDS is also now active in India following a successful pilot.

Overall we are seeing an increasing level of skills development in response to the industry shortage already identified in the first State of the Nation report. As in many industries there is a global dimension and this suggests the international approach will be more important going forward. We continue to monitor this and hope for more progress by the next State of the Nation report.

Recognition of skills and qualifications is essential and Governments could take a lead in the transport planning field by fully recognising the qualifications for tendering processes. At the moment the Scottish Government does so for TPP, and this is spreading to other local authorities. **The national Governments should all make it clear that TPtech, IncTP and TPP (CTPP) are relevant qualifications for tendering and costing processes.**

218 <https://www.racfoundation.org/media-centre/road-pricing-petition-paved-way-for-brexiteer-appeal> gives reflections on this

219 Examples include <https://www.mobilitylab.org.uk/#/>; <https://www.commonplace.is/>; <https://sraltd.co.uk/>



