**THE NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION – RESPONSE BY THE TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY (TPS)**

The Transport Planning Society (TPS) is an independent institutional body in the UK, established to facilitate, develop and promote best practice in transport planning and to provide a focus for dialogue between practitioners and others interested in the field. It is supported by four long established professional institutions –ICE, CIHT, CILT and RTPI -all of whom have an interest in transport planning as well as their own core activities.

The Transport Planning Society administers its own Professional Development Scheme for transport planners, leading to award of the Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification which is the only professional qualification uniquely aimed at transport planners. The Society has over1200 individual members and 30 corporate member providers of transport planning services in the UK and elsewhere.

Our response (set out below in italics) has been drafted by the Policy Group within the TPS Board, all of whom were elected by the membership as a whole. The Policy Group is in constant dialogue with other members of the Society and the views expressed here may be taken as broadly representative of them.

Q1. The Government has given the National Infrastructure Commission objectives to:

* foster long-term and sustainable economic growth across all regions of the UK
* improve the UK’s international competitiveness
* improve the quality of life for those living in the UK

What issues do you think are particularly important to consider as the

Commission works to this objective?

*Looking at the consultation document overall it is clear that (a) this is incredibly ambitious (a plan for everything for a Government that so far has shown extreme reluctance to have a plan for anything, and (b) there is a very long process of consultation and engagement  proposed stretching over the next 2 years.  On both grounds any responses need to be high level – aimed at ensuring that TPS is fully engaged, for example in future round tables, expert panels, etc rather than trying to answer some of the more the more specific questions listed. We have however attempted to structure our response to the NIC’s question format.*

*TPS considers that in general terms there is an endemic failure to place new infrastructure investment in the context of:*

*1 a framework which links transport provision (services as much as infrastructure) with housing, employment and industrial policy*

*2 recognition of the high value of non-motorised travel as a balance to the bias towards what Eddington called “grands projets”*

*3 a plan to manage use of infrastructure (in terms of overall demand) and to maintain it – building more when what exists is deteriorating or congested will achieve none of the above objectives*

*4 a means of avoiding vague statements about quality of life (as above) and ensuring that environmental improvement and avoidance of climate change really influence decisions – neutrality of impact is not enough.*

*It is clear that, for example, demand management or mode transfer will strongly influence the need for or the scale of new infrastructure.*

*A clear example is that, for far too long, governing bodies have excluded housing as a key, determining infrastructural component. In the NIC’s Executive Summary to its consultation document it is stated “*The NIC will consider the potential interactions between its infrastructure recommendations and housing supply*”. Given the abandonment of any rational and implementable housing strategy and indeed regional planning strategies, successive government bodies and agencies have relied on laissez-faire and market dominated policies. This, when combined with the lack of an effective industrial strategy has contributed to poor economic and productivity performance compared with our closest comparable competitors. This has all served to accelerate the regional disparities and imbalances now so apparent and serious. Just considering housing supply is not enough in taking key infrastructure investment decisions. What about housing occupancies and affordability, the reluctance of some local authorities to accept more housing, the stark imbalances of living conditions and infrastructure qualities even across our city regions?*

Q2. Do you agree that, in undertaking the NIA, the Commission should be:

* Open, transparent and consultative
* Independent, objective and rigorous
* Forward looking, challenging established thinking
* Comprehensive, taking a whole system approach, understanding and studying interdependencies and feedbacks?

Are there any principles that should inform the way that the Commission

produces the NIA that are missing?

*We would all agree with these aims but consider them to be too general to generate in-depth comment. There is a lot of activity relevant to these aims, for example TPS is currently engaged in an initiative to make modelling and forecasting more transparent and objective in a way which supports evidence based decision making both for clients and suppliers. We would be happy to keep the Commission in touch with this as it progresses over the coming months.*

*A way needs to be found to focus on the actual, evidence-based economic, social, and environmental impacts of delivering combinations of infrastructure investment. Taking just transport schemes, the TPS recognises that there are many interdependencies and cross-cutting impacts. Hence our suggestion of a clear set of frameworks within infrastructure should be considered (Q1).*

Transport

The Commission will adopt a multi-modal approach to the analysis of transport need, looking at how key road, rail, ports, airports and other transport arteries support the movement of people and freight into and across the country. A critical interdependency which the NIA will aim to better understand is the impact of future transport provision on the energy sector; in particular the potential implications of large-scale car, lorry and rail electrification.

The built environment:

The Government have decided that the Commission’s remit will not include housing supply directly. However, infrastructure can affect the viability of housing projects both large and small, and housing supply is an important driver of infrastructure need. As such, the Government’s remit envisages that “the Commission will consider the potential interactions between its infrastructure recommendations and housing supply. Information about the potential locations of strategically important housing allocations, such as new settlements and urban extensions when they come forward, will be an important component of the evidence base collected by the Commission, which it may use to assess infrastructure needs and make recommendations that co-ordinate the timing and delivery of new infrastructure with the delivery of new housing.”

Q3. Do you agree that the NIA should cover these sectors in the way in which

they are each described?

*In terms of transport there is virtually no ports policy other than a market led approach, multi-modal assessment of passenger travel is weak (rail and road use different demand models) and virtually non-existent for freight, despite the clear possibilities for rail (see for example Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges). The Commission should recognise this and seek to improve its assessment processes to include demand management impacts on need and scale.*

*We also need to start with a bottom-up focus at the sub-regional and regional levels in order to build-up the National/UK-wide strategy. We need to look at the potential for achieving a synergenic/critical mass of infrastructures to underpin the re-balancing of the UK.*

Q4. Are there particular aspects of infrastructure provision in these sectors

which you think the NIA should focus on?

*Transport of course – as this fundamentally serves the basic and aspirational needs for the movement of people, goods and services and significantly relates to land-use planning. See reply to Q1 and 3 – defining demand from housing, employment, and other land uses is a key input to decision making as well as demand management.*

Q5. The NIA will seek to pull together infrastructure needs across sectors,

recognising interdependencies. Are there are particular areas where you think

such interdependencies are likely to be important?

*The TPS considers that housing and industrial strategies must feature far more and that transport and energy strategies need to be particularly closely integrated. Demand management by means of price-signalling needs to be introduced more widely, both for passenger and freight.*

*Land-use planning, funding, pay as you go, pricing and project appraisals must be further integrated across the whole infrastructure landscape. Central funding at present is now too often regarded as “smoke and mirrors’ with few LAs and even the new CAs not really knowing where they are going with considerable time and resource wastage resulting.*

Q7. Are there any other cross-cutting issues that you think are particularly

important?

*Traffic management, demand management, the rapidly changing supply/delivery logistics practices that apply new pressures on local retailing offers and road networks. Ports and regional airports strategies need to be less London-focussed. Both could include demand management.*

Stakeholder & Public Engagement

Q13. How best do you believe the Commission can engage with different parts

of society to help build its evidence base and test its conclusions?

*A multi-layered strategy is a sensible way forward, but direct engagement is preferable to social surveys, where the context and form of questions can strongly influence the answers. Translating stated preference, for example, into monetary values rarely gains widespread agreement even among practitioners (look at the value of travel time!). TPS is happy to be involved and if NIC feels it would be helpful, to host an event in due course.*

*The key to a successful consultation and engagement is that participants can see evidence of their input being recognised and understood, even when it is not agreed with.*

Responses to this consultation should be sent to

NIAEvidence@nic.gsi.gov.uk

by 5 August 2016.

In exceptional circumstances we will accept submissions in hard copy. If you

need to submit a hard copy, please send your response to the Commission

Secretariat at the following address:

NIA Evidence

National Infrastructure Commission

1 Horse Guards Road

London

SW1A 2HQ

Are you satisfied with this consultation? If not, or you have any other

observations about how we can improve the process, please contact us at:

National Infrastructure Commission,

1 Horse Guards Road

London

SW1A 2HQ

or by e-mail to:

NIAEvidence@nic.gsi.gov.uk