

Transport Planning Society

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Chair's Report AGM 20 February 2014

Membership

The Society's membership continues to grow and we have a good representation across locations, age groups and gender, the total now being 937. Our Registered Members (MTPS) now number around 230. We now have 26 stakeholder members and 13 corporate members whose involvement we greatly appreciate, Vectos and AMEC being the most recent additions to our stakeholder members, Hampshire County Council has upgraded and Momentum Transport Planning has joined as a single site member.

Member survey

The annual members' survey provided some useful insights into your views on current hot topics and how the Society works. Members supported an integrated approach with land use planning, demand management including price mechanisms, maintaining infrastructure before embarking on 'grand projects' and disillusionment with DfT's approach to appraisal including accounting for carbon. We hope to repeat the survey year on year.

Events

A healthy number of events have taken place in the past year and I have been pleased to attend meetings in Birmingham, London, Bedford, Cardiff and Glasgow. I am looking forward to attending regional meetings in the forthcoming year also. The aviation debate which brought together the main protagonists was a valuable event and we hope to have similar events in the future.

The annual pub quiz takes place on 6 March.

Transport Practitioners Meeting takes place in July, a good opportunity for everyone, particularly younger professionals, to exchange ideas.

Bursaries

We have received presentations from four bursarians this year and would welcome submissions later this year on the topic to be decided by the Board in due course.

Policy matters

We have submitted responses to Government on a number of topics and will continue to exert influence over decision-makers, particularly where we can combine forces with other professional organizations.

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Skills Initiative PDS and TPP

Awareness of the Professional Development Scheme is widening with 25 consultancies involved plus Transport for London, Hampshire and Leicestershire County Councils but we would like to see more local authority involvement although times continue to be difficult in the public sector.

I will be chairing the TPP Professional Standards Committee until May when a CIHT appointee takes over for the next two years. The Committee's Action Plan is being addressed and we have made considerable progress in the past couple of years to review all the guidance notes and the web site and are now focusing activity on marketing the qualification. We have been pleased to see the number of submissions increase in 2013 and hope that more people will submit both through the Standard Route and the Senior Route in 2014. We also appear to making ground in getting the TPP absorbed into procurement processes.

Board changes

I would like to thank the Board members who are standing down having completed their terms: Chris Mills who has fulfilled the Treasurer's role and Nicola Hill who has been the Company Secretary through the inception of TPS as a company limited by guarantee to the present. The previous Chair, Keith Buchan and our current Director for Regions and Nations, Dave White are standing for re-election. I would also like to thank Dominic McGrath for taking over as Treasurer and Sara Andrews who will be taking on the role of Company Secretary.

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Key issues for the profession

Transport planning remains very much in the news. Two hugely contentious issues continue to excite both promoters and objectors, namely the aviation/runway capacity deliberations and High Speed Two. However it is fair to say that reasoned debate has sometimes taken second place to opinion and supposition. There are other major issues that we should be concerned about such as the erosion of bus services, the ever-changing rail industry and the considerable resurgence of cycling. Behind all this though is a reduced emphasis on climate change (until a few weeks ago!) and the environment would now appear to be less important than economic growth, important though that it. Embedding the principles of sustainable transport in every aspect of what we do continues to be a struggle, not least with the overhaul of the planning system which doesn't display much understanding of the enabling role of transport. We have however seen the emergence of large scale behavioural change programmes through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund programmes across the country. The links between transport and the economy, health and other sectors are becoming more evident and need to be highlighted further.

So what can we look forward to over the next year or so? The resilience of transport networks will continue to be in the spotlight with planes, trains and roads all being affected by adverse weather events. We have high profile events such as the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow where travel planning is the key to success. We will need to reinforce the role of local transport to decision-makers, speaking for the profession and the continued need to represent the interests of walking, cycling and public transport use as alongside accommodating the demand for travel by car. Here the importance of planning and transport strategies is particularly important at a time when local government is being squeezed more than ever before.

For the Society, we need to continue the themes I raised when I became Chair last year:

- A series of high profile events across the country;
- Promoting the skills initiative;
- Building links with our corporate and stakeholder members, sponsoring organizations, government and others,
- Support individual members to get involved; and
- Raising the profile of the profession.

Thank you all for your continued support.