

Transport Planning Society

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 6 March 2025

Chair's Report

Context – a planet (literally) on fire

The 12 months since the TPS's 2024 AGM have been truly tumultuous. 2024 was confirmed as the hottest year ever recorded. The accelerating and escalating impacts of the Climate Emergency were increasingly apparent, with catastrophic flooding in Valencia, devastating fires in Los Angeles and severe storms in the UK. The social and economic implications of carbon pollution also became more evident. Weather forecasters Accuweather estimated the total damage and economic cost of the LA fires could be between \$250bn and \$275 billion. The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries issued a report on "Planetary Solvency". This projected that by the end of this century, global heating could lead to between 2 and 4 billion deaths, a 25-50% reduction in global GDP, major extinction events and "severe socio-political fragmentation" (i.e. state failure).

You might think that the increasingly severe impacts of the Climate Emergency would have spurred national governments to redouble their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But in fact, 2024 also saw the highest ever level of carbon pollution. With transport now the largest source of UK carbon pollution, the need to decarbonise transport – particularly road transport – is more urgent than ever.

Politics and Policy

Turbulence in the world's climatic system was matched by political turmoil, both in the UK and overseas. The Labour Party won a decisive victory in the UK General Election in July, although polling analysis suggests their support is wider than it is deep. The new Government's "mission-led" approach to policy ought in principle to support a "joined up" approach to decision-making. This would position transport as the critical "enabler" of wider goals, such as improved economic productivity, reduced inequality, better public health and decarbonisation. The early signs were promising. On taking office, new Secretary of State for Transport Louise Haigh said that none of the government's core goals - growth, net zero, opportunity, women and girls' safety, health – "can be realised without transport as a key enabler". That sounded suspiciously (and positively) like treating transport – and mobility – as means to a set of ends, rather than as ends in themselves.

Labour's "headline" transport policies are encouraging – mode shift, rail reform, significant improvements in local bus services, "unprecedented" investment in walking and cycling and a "vision-led" approach to considering transport requirements in land-use planning. And these commitments are to be framed by the first Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS) for over a quarter of a century, overseen by Active Travel England CEO Danny Williams. The DfT news release said that for too long *"there has been no national plan for how transport should be designed and delivered in England, which has led to a fragmented and inefficient system that lacks join-up and cohesion. As a result, many of the people in our cities, towns and rural areas are poorly connected, with transport systems that don't work for them"*. Delivery of the INTS will be underpinned by further devolution of funding and authority to regional and local government. Louise Haigh also announced a review of the DfT's Capital Programme, with input from an advisory panel of which I am a member.

Perhaps inevitably, it hasn't all been plain sailing. Louise Haigh announced her resignation in November, to be replaced by the well-regarded Heidi Alexander. Labour's first Budget was a mixed bag in transport terms, with positive investment in buses and rail alongside no change in Fuel Duty and a planned increase in rail fares. The Chancellor Rachel Reeves has made clear that the Government's growth mission is in fact the "first amongst equals" of its five missions. Significant reform of the planning system is in prospect, designed to support the "builders not the blockers" in delivering the Government's 1.5 million housing target and major new infrastructure. And Rachel Reeves' room for fiscal manoeuvre seems to be dwindling by the day. The forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review will require some very difficult decisions on both taxation and spending. It remains to be seen whether the Treasury will invest to support transport's critical role in delivering the government's wider goals.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump's re-election as the 47th US President in November has been described as the "greatest political comeback in history". Following his inauguration, President Trump issued a blizzard of Executive Orders. These exited the USA from the Paris Climate Accord (for the second time), rowed back on President Biden's investment in green technology and confirmed his intention to "drill, baby, drill" to expand US oil and gas production. Mr Trump has since "moved fast and broken things", turning decades-old assumptions about the USA's role in the world on their head.

It has been a huge honour to serve as the TPS Chair for a second year. The TPS continues to punch far above its modest, largely voluntary weight thanks to the work done by the TPS Board, its wider membership and our delivery partners. We organised a wide range of events in-person, hybrid and on-line, including a successful Transport Planning Day. We made several important contributions to the national transport policy debate. The Skills programme continued to evolve, supporting the professional development of transport planners. We developed our Corporate Supporters programme and our work in the UK's regions and nations. And we continued to take forward our business development strategy following the Strategy Day in October 2023.

I have summarised some of the key highlights of the year below.

TPS programme delivery and business development

Against the challenging backdrop set out above, the TPS has had another very successful and productive year. The TPS Board continue to do fantastic work across our main programmes:

Events (Ruby Stringer) – the TPS organised a fantastic programme of events, including our first-ever Summer Reception in June, generously supported by Jacobs (with thanks to Board members Susan Cross and Tim Cuthbert). We had a series of great policy events both in-person and on-line, covering everything from reducing car use in rural areas to what recent IPSOS opinion polling tells us about public attitudes to sustainable transport. Highlight of the year was November's Transport Planning Day at the ICE, on "The Principles, Policies, Practicalities and Politics of Reducing Car Use in the UK". Future of Roads Minister Lillian Greenwood MP was our keynote speaker, positively saying we need to work out what kind of places we want to live in and then create the transport system we need to support them. There was a great panel, a near-capacity crowd for the event and some top class networking over tea and later at the drinks reception. TPD was generously supported by our sponsors Buro Happold, Jacobs, Systra, Tracsis, Stantec, Idaso, Mayer Brown, Kestrel Surveys and Charge Surveys

Policy (Lisa Martin/Mark Frost) – Lisa and Mark took on the policy mantle from Tom van Vuren following the 2024 AGM. They have built on Tom's great work, establishing a new TPS Policy Panel with expert members drawn from the TPS's membership. We now have a confirmed Panel membership of 55 members, who represent a fantastic resource for the TPS to use in developing policy positions and responses to consultations. We continued our work to influence national policy, with letters to then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Rachel Reeves on the Budget; publication of a TPS "transport manifesto" based on the Member Survey; and comprehensive submissions on consultations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS)

Skills (Keith Buchan) – the TPS Skills programme continues to provide critical support for the professional development of transport planners. Their skills will be in high demand to deliver the government's ambitions on economic development, new housing and decarbonisation. Keith has worked tirelessly to make sure our skills offer remains relevant and reflects the development needs of transport planners at every stage of their career. Key highlights from the year included:

- More skills partners than ever before
- Passing 50 PDS completions in January now using IncTP title
- Completing the set up (contracts and software) to provide TPTEchs for the technician apprentices
- Starting the development of an e-library for TPS members covering a range of professional development resources
- Reviewing impact of AI on all professional reviews *and TPP Knowledge requirements in particular*

Membership (Lisa Martin/Darren Kirkman/Tim Cuthbert/Isabelle Milford) – the TPS's individual members and corporate supporters are the lifeblood of the organisation. Lisa Martin led a very useful review of our Stakeholder Membership programme, including our "proposition" to organisations in both the public and private sectors. This led to a simplification of our supporter programme and the creation of a new category of 'Public Sector Partners', who will be supported by Darren Kirkman. Tim Cuthbert and Isabelle Milford have also been investigating the TPS's

offer to its individual members, including how we could reduce the “attrition” that occurs each year following membership renewal.

Transport Planner of the Year (TPOY)/Young Transport Planner of the Year (YTPOY)

The TPOY and YTPOY once again revealed the huge talent in the transport planning profession. The finalists for both TPOY (Nicola Waight, Ruby Stringer, David Bowers and Sam Margolis) and YTPOY (Devon Barrett, Dominika Banach, Hannah Donovan and Natalie Gravett-Foyn) had very impressive track records across a broad range of technical disciplines. Congratulations to Nicola Waight (TPOY) and Devon Barrett (YTPOY). Nicola will give the TPOY lecture immediately after the TPS AGM on 6 March. <https://tps.org.uk/events/transport-planner-of-the-year-2024-lecture>

TPS Bursaries (Laura Putt/Liani Baglietto Castellares) - The question set for this year's Bursarians was: 'What is the role of the private car in society – how can we best influence it?' We were delighted to award £500 to our three finalists - Kyle Clarkson, George King and Adelaide Tsim, following high quality presentations to our six judges in January. Laura Putt (TPS member and former Board Director) will announce the overall winner at the AGM. All the papers from this year's finalists (and those from previous years) will be available on the TPS website (along with those from other years) here: <https://tps.org.uk/profession/bursaries>. Keep an eye out on the TPS website for the lunchtime webinar involving the three Bursary Finalists. Thanks to all the Bursarians, our judges and the TPS Board members who acted as mentors.

Communications (Georgia Corr) – Georgia has continued to work closely with Jo Field and her team at JFG Communications to ensure the TPS communicates the great work we are doing in organising events, supporting transport planners and influencing policy. The Board will be reviewing the TPS website at a future meeting to make sure it is working successfully as a key channel of communication.

Regions and Nations (James Gleave) – James is doing great work to support our network of regional reps and volunteers, including on the ever-popular TPS Quiz. Regional Development is a key priority for the coming year, including to increase and improve TPS representation outside London and the South East.

Governance and Business Development (Kieran Seale/Lisa Martin) – 2024 saw the Board delivering against the priorities we agreed at our strategy away day in October 2023. These including increase our impact, growing our membership and generating more revenue from a variety of sources. We were inspired by a session with Sonya Byers, CEO of Women in Transport (WIT), in June 2024. Sonya and the WIT Board have overseen a transformation of WIT, developing from a largely volunteer-run organisation to a body with a number of paid staff, a broad programme of activities and a corresponding impact on the sector. The TPS's business development work is being overseen by a Business Strategy Steering Group, made up of a number of TPS Board members. The January Board meeting agreed to commission Lisa Martin to do a review of the current TPS operating model and come up with options for how that model could evolve. TPS Company Secretary Kieran Seale has applied his huge professional experience to ensure our decisions and wider activities are properly governed. And the ICE's Kath Coldwell has done sterling service in supporting the Board's meetings.

Conclusions and look ahead

2025 promises to be another very interesting year, both in the UK and internationally. The TPS continues to go from strength to strength in what are without question very challenging times. We will have a number of new Board members following the AGM and a new Chair during the course of the next 6 months, who can help take the organisation forward. I want to put on record my personal thanks to the TPS Board for all their hard work developing the TPS over the past year; to Kath Coldwell at the ICE for supporting the Board; and to Jo Field and her team at JFG Communications for their support on communications and engagement.