

Transport Planning Society

Meeting Date	13 July 2023
Report Title	Chair's Report
For Decision or for Information?	For Information
Decision Sought	N/A
Report Summary	This report summarises the activity of the chair since the last board meeting.

The period since the May Board meeting has continued to be busy, reinforcing my view that the TPS punches significantly above its weight in terms of profile and influence, based on significant voluntary effort and great support from JFG and the ICE.

Board Engagement

I have had very useful bilateral discussions with Board officers, including with the Treasurer on the TPS' finances, our overall financial position and how we can build on the excellent work she does as TPS Treasurer to get a "forward look" of the likely out-turn at the end of the financial year. I also had a very productive meeting with the new Company Secretary on wider governance of the TPS, including how we can make sure Board members can feel empowered to make relevant decisions between Board meetings.

Officer's Meeting 27 June 2023

I met with the Board Officers on 27 June April. Key actions were:

- **July Board** – TPS officers to ensure their Board papers for the 13 July meeting are sent to Kath Coldwell/uploaded to Sharepoint by the end of the w/b 3 July;
- **TPS financial information** – TPS Chair to discuss with the Treasurer how to improve the "currency" of the financial data used for finance updates to the Board, so that the "year to date" data is as up-to-date as possible;
- **TPS Annual Dinner and Summer Party** – all to do what they can to promote the dinner and secure more bookings. Agreed to take stock following the 2023 dinner to ensure planning for the 2024 dinner takes account of potential downturn in paid-for bookings;
- **September Board meeting** – agreed to hold the September Board meeting in Edinburgh and pay travel expenses and one night's accommodation for Board members attending in person if required. Agreed it was important for the TPS to have a "presence" outside London and the South East and to use TPS contacts in Scotland to help arrange a event on the evening of the Board meeting, to highlight the important transport policy and planning developments in Scotland.

TPS Business Plan and Strategy Day

We were unable to find a date for a TPS Board strategy/away day that enough members of the Board could make before the summer break. We have therefore decided to find a new date in October (between the September and November Board meetings), in the hope that more people can make it. This is likely to be an internally-facilitated half-day session, in the afternoon. The aim of the workshop would be to generate a draft/outline Business Plan for development and adoption for the 2024/5 financial year. The TPS previously held strategy workshops in 2019 and 2020 and former TPS Chair Stephen Bennett has very helpfully sent on the materials and outputs from those workshops. Board member input to the design and facilitation of the 2023 workshop would be very welcome.

Events and engagement

Future of Rail Seminar – ICE 4 May

I chaired an excellent seminar on the Future of (Great) British Rail at the ICE on 4 May. This was almost exactly 3 months after Transport Secretary Mark Harper had given the George Bradshaw address (also at the ICE) on the future of rail. There was a great turnout to hear former TPS Chair and Director of Strategic Planning at the Great British Railway Transition Team (GBRTT) Elaine Seagriff give her views on the prospects for the rail sector (and for GBR) and then take questions from people attending in person and on-line.

Sub-National Transport Bodies Conference – 5 June

The TPS was a sponsor for the second Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs) conference in Birmingham on 5 June. Presenters to the conference included Richard Holden MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DfT); Andy Rhind (Director of Regional Partnerships and Delivery at the DfT); Nick Harris, CEO of National Highways; and Anit Chandarana (Lead Director, GBR Transition Team). All the speakers made clear that the STBs are critical in strategic transport planning for their regions and integrating with other sectors and issues, such as energy, public health and sustainable economic development.

ICE Summer Lecture 19 June - “Roads and Decarbonisation”

I took part in a panel discussion as part of the ICE’s Summer Prestige Lecture, which explored whether we should be building any new roads given the challenge of decarbonising surface transport. The keynote speakers were Nick Harris (CEO of National Highways) and Andy Falley, (Deputy Director for the Strategic Road Network, Welsh Government). It was a fascinating debate, particularly given the Welsh Government’s decision to cancel or pause a significant number of strategic road schemes alongside aiming to reduce road vehicle kms by 20% by 2030. Andy Falley made clear that (at least in Wales), electrification of the fleet will be insufficient to deliver transport decarbonisation and that tackling traffic levels (and hence network capacity) have to be included in any policy approach designed to reduce carbon emissions. The contrast with the position of the UK Government was telling.

Transport Practitioners' Meeting – 28/29 June

TPS is also a sponsor of TPM and this was the first time I've attended it. Unfortunately I was only able to attend for the second day, but it was excellent. Really interesting sessions on integrating land use and transport planning; a "decarbonisation toolkit" for local authorities developed for Midlands Connect; and developments around redefining the role and purpose of the road network in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The TPS Policy Director announced the Transport Planner of the Year (Will Pedley) and the first-ever Young Transport Planner of the Year at the TPM dinner.

Transport Planning Day 2023

Plans are now well underway for TPD2023. We have set up the TPD steering group, which has met twice. We refined the theme for this year's TPD in response to helpful feedback from the Policy Group. The theme is now "Planning for and delivering a rapid and equitable transition to a decarbonised transport system". The steering group agreed that the original theme was potentially too broad but was keen to include the issues around equity and the distributional impacts of decarbonisation in the TPD discussions. We are now focusing on developing the programme of supporting events and making sure we have the sponsorship in place for this year's event.

Policy Developments

National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) consultation.

TPS submitted an excellent response to the DfT Consultation on the NNNPS, which provides the strategic "backdrop" to decisions about development road and rail network infrastructure. Many thanks to Keith Buchan, Keith Mitchell, Tom Van Vuren and Mark Frost for preparing the submission. Further thanks are also due to Keith Buchan, who gave evidence on the TPS submission to the Transport Select Committee. It was a very impressive performance in the face of a challenging debate, which you can see [here](#) (Keith starts around 10:33)

National Highways policy documents

National Highways have produced a raft of policy documents over the past few weeks. Of particular significance (and relevance to TPS) are the [Strategic Road Network Initial Report](#) (essentially the opening "bid" for RIS3); the [Long-Term Strategic Plan to 2050](#) (NH's view of the long-term priorities for the Strategic Road Network); and the [NH Environmental Sustainability Strategy](#). Given the view of the Welsh Government on decarbonising road traffic, it is worth noting that the NH Sustainability Strategy commits to net zero corporate emissions by 2030, maintenance and construction emissions by 2040 and road user emissions by 2050, but the only action related to tackling road user emissions is to work collaboratively with other partners "to research innovative solutions that accelerate vehicle decarbonisation". It remains to be seen whether this position is technically or politically sustainable.

Resolution Foundation Report on national road user charging

The Resolution Foundation has produced a new report to join the long list of other reports arguing that the Government needs to introduce a national road pricing scheme to tackle the revenue gap and risk of increased congestion caused by the electrification of the national vehicle fleet. The technical/transport planning consensus on the need for national road pricing seems pretty strong. The challenge – as ever – will be around the politics of introducing any kind of national pricing scheme.