

Transport Planning Society

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 7 March 2024

Chair's Report

Context

2023 was a tumultuous year. There was a high degree of political and policy “churn” in Westminster and Whitehall and several important policy developments, including the publication of the *Plan for Drivers* and the revival of rhetoric around the need to avoid “anti-car” policies. Meanwhile, 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded, greenhouse gas emissions continued to rise and COP28 took place in Dubai. The historic agreement on the need to transition “away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner” was described by many observers as being a “litany of loopholes”. Opinions also differed as to whether the COP28 agreement covers the transport sector.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as the TPS Chair over the past 12 months. The experience has confirmed for me the TPS’ ability to punch far above its modest, largely voluntary weight and the huge value of the work done by the TPS Board and its wider membership. 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 membership programme and our work in the UK’s regions and nations. And our presence outside the UK continued to grow, particularly in Australasia.

In all this, we were supported by our partnerships with the ICE and other professional bodies (RTPI, CIHT and the CILT) and with the Jo Field Group (JFG), who have helped amplify the TPS voice in the media and in Westminster and Whitehall.

I have picked out below some key highlights from 2023.

Events

The TPS organised or was involved in/represented at a broad range of events in 2023. These included:

- The Annual International Quiz in March, featuring no fewer than 99 teams from across the UK and New Zealand;

- The 2022 Transport Planner of the Year lecture in March, featuring Jillian Anable;
- A lecture on “The next chapter in British Rail” in May, by former TPS Chair and GBRTT Director of Strategic Planning Elaine Seagriff;
- TPS sponsorship of the Sub-National Transport Bodies conference in Birmingham;
- Participation in the ICE Summer Lecture on “Roads and Decarbonisation”;
- Sponsorship of the Transport Practitioners’ Meeting in June (including announcement of Transport Planner of the Year at the first-ever Young Transport Planner of the Year);
- The Annual Dinner and summer party and after-dinner speech by former TPS Chair and CEO of the RTPi Victoria Hills in July;
- A debate on “Meeting the challenge of Scotland’s Transport Strategy” in Edinburgh and a webinar on “the Buchanan Report at 60” with the CIHT and AoU in September;
- Sponsorship of the Local Transport Summit and representation at Highways UK in October;
- Participation in the Landor “Walking and Cycling Innovations” conference in Manchester in November;
- A successful Transport Planning Day in November; and
- Attendance on the top table at the CIHT annual lunch in December.

Policy

The TPS continued to be very active in seeking to influence transport policy, planning and practice. This included engagement with politicians and officials, responses to government policy developments and proactive policy work.

The Policy Group’s 2023 Business Plan aimed to continue to engage our membership more in the Policy Group activities. We regularly invite members to contribute to our consultation responses and wider policy statements. There are several TPS members that are not Board members co-opted onto the Policy Group, contributing to the Group’s outputs and widening the representativeness of our contributions the policy debate. We welcome further expressions of interest from members to join the group.

Key highlights in 2023 included:

- Continued engagement with DfT and DLUHC officials on developments in transport and land-use planning, including the (emerging) draft Local Transport Plans guidance and the national accessibility planning tool;
- Submission of written evidence to the Transport Select Committee enquiry into Strategic Road Investment in February and oral evidence provided by Keith Buchan in June;
- A joint response with the CIHT, Transport for New Homes, Sustrans, Living Streets and CPRE on the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March;
- A response to the National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) in July;
- A response to National Highways’ consultation on RIS3 in July;

- A letter to the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in August, reaffirming the TPS' support for local transport investments like LTNs that increase transport choice;
- A productive meeting with Transport Minister Jesse Norman MP in October;

The Policy Group's major output in 2023 were the parking policy papers, written in collaboration with Andrew Potter from Parking Perspectives. We published a report containing 18 recommendations for using parking as a policy instrument to support more sustainable travel choices and an attractive one-page summary to make the message easier to access by decision-makers, including an infographic to illustrate our 18 recommendations, that transport planners can use as an aide-memoire in their day-to-day work. A webinar is planned for 27 February.

The Policy Group continues to benefit from the expertise provided by the JFG in shaping and promoting our outputs to a wider readership than just using the website. For 2024 the intention is to be more proactive rather than reactive, shaping the transport policy debate, but also enhance the way in which the Policy Group's outputs are communicated to the broadest set of stakeholders. The efforts that went into the production and promotion of the parking policy papers are the shape of things to come.

At the Transport Practitioners Meeting dinner Will Pedley from Oxfordshire was awarded the title of Transport Planner of the Year for his work on implementing the decide and provide approach to transport assessments. We look forward to hearing from Will about his recent successes in that respect at our Annual Lecture after the AGM.

Skills

The skills programme continued to evolve and support the professional development of transport planners, both in the UK and overseas. Key highlights included:

- Jointly working with CIHT to deliver TPP;
- Delivering TPS PDS including approximately 50 first reviews and 15 final reviews, awarding IncTP;
- Expanding PDS access to local authorities and their apprentices
- Delivering Apprenticeship End Point Assessments (EPAs) and awarding TPTEch;
- Work to review and support Level 3 and Level 6 (degree) apprenticeships
- Work to publicise transport planning and qualifications in schools
- Work to support internationalisation of TPP and PDS.

Communications

In the past year we have actively sought to build upon our communications strategy to members and the wider public. We've continued to issue updates on topical transport planning developments, TPS events, and wider initiatives such as the TPS Bursary to Members through a combination of daily social media posts via the Society's [X](#) (formerly Twitter) and [LinkedIn](#) accounts, monthly email newsletters, and updates to the TPS website, such as blog posts.

We transitioned the TPS LinkedIn page to become a business profile in order to increase the

effectiveness of our comms, ensure a smoother user experience for TPS members and allow us to better capture engagement and demographic statistics of how members are engaging with our communications. This has allowed us to gain demographic and wider comms metrics, in addition to enabling better promotion of the Society's benefits, such as our events programme. We have grown the new page to >2000 followers in less than a year. This exceeds the connections on the previous page, which had been running for several years.

We have also made a conscious effort to diversify how we engage with National Government and politicians, sharing members' views on proposed transport policy changes, and forthcoming policies. The Policy Group has spearheaded a lot of this fantastic work which has included responding to public consultations and hosting these on our website, and writing to the Government on proposed policy changes on topics such as Active Travel and Mode Shift Schemes and issuing this to the press (see Policy above).

TPS Bursary

The 2023 Bursary competition went from strength to strength, with a lot of interest in the topic of environmental and social impacts. We wanted to build our evidence base of case studies that address environmental damage and explore how they interact with social exclusion. The question set was: *'Investigate a transport intervention that has been shown to reduce environmental damage. How did it interact with poverty / social exclusion? How transferrable is that solution for other places/problems?'*

We received a large number of high-quality applications and were able to support 4 finalists to carry out their research. Papers were reviewed by the review panel, and we enjoyed the resulting impressive presentations in January. The judges and the Board of the TPS were delighted to announce that all the finalists were awarded a bursary of £500 for their work.

The successful Bursarians for 2023 were:

- Greg Sinnett – AECOM: "Metrolink for the Masses: would extensions to Greater Manchester's light rail network be socially successful?"
- Omar Ajaz – Mott Macdonald: "Bus Rapid Transit [BRT]'s Green Revolution: Investigating Environmental Mitigation, Social Inclusion, and Transferrable Solutions for Sustainable Mobility"
- Sarah Garvin – Jacobs: "20-minute neighbourhoods: The vital role of transport in creating inclusive communities in Dundee".
- Anshel Cohen – Arup: "What impact did Sheffield's Grey to Green scheme have on social exclusion? Could lessons learned from the Grey to Green scheme be used in other urban regeneration projects?"

Laura Putt (TPS member and former Board Director) organised this year's competition and will announce the overall winner at the AGM. In the meantime, please take time to read all the papers from all this year's finalists available on the TPS website (along with those from other years) here: <https://tps.org.uk/profession/bursaries>

The Board would like to thank all the finalists, mentors and judges. TPS see the Bursary as a good way to support development of young professionals, by giving transport planners a chance to undertake research on a theme of interest to the society. We also aim to build a community with young professionals and get more people involved with the activities of the TPS. Feedback from this year has been positive, and we're always open to hearing ideas about how we can make the scheme more attractive or inclusive.

Governance and supporting activities

We have taken some initial steps to review the way that TPS is run to look at whether improvements can be made.

The first of these steps is a proposed change to the Chair's term of office, which is up for consideration at the AGM. The current maximum length of the Chair's term is two years - in contrast with the three-year terms of other Board members. The proposal is to give the AGM the option of extending the term to three years. It also clears up what would happen if a Chair left between AGMs.

The second step is to look at how the TPS Board itself operates. The Board is large - currently with 23 members. That includes attendance by institutional representatives from the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, Royal Town Planning Institute, Institution of Civil Engineers and Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. In discussion with them we have agreed to hold regular meetings to exchange ideas, rather than for them to attend our Board meetings.

We have also looked at the process for choosing Transport Planner of the Year and Young Transport Planner of the Year to ensure that they are carried out as fairly as possible. The new approach introduces an anonymised shortlisting process with specific criteria against which to judge nominees.

Other supporting activities during 2023 included:

- Continuing development of the extent and capacity of our network of regional representatives;
- Further development of our membership proposition, informed by the 2023 Membership Survey; and
- Refinement of our financial reporting, including development of a year-end forecast;

TPS Strategy Review and Business Plan

The TPS does not currently have a Business Plan or an agreed annual delivery programme. The Board held a Strategy Away Day in October, which provided a valuable opportunity for the Board to step back from day-to-day delivery and think about how the Society could continue to evolve over the next 1-5 years. We are now finalising an agreed Action Plan for 2024 and developing a longer-term Business Plan. These will provide the foundation on which the TPS can build on its existing achievements.

Conclusion and look ahead

This is a very impressive programme of activities by any standard, but particularly considering it is largely the product of voluntary effort, with critical in-kind and financial support from our generous sponsors and continued partnership working with JFG, the ICE and the other professional bodies.

2024 promises to be another busy and challenging year, with almost half the world's population taking part in national elections including in the UK, the US, Russia and India. The outcome of these elections will prove to be consequential for many years and possibly for humanity's future given their potential impacts on efforts to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies.

The TPS' evolving 2024 Action Plan and Business Plan and engagement with our partner organisations will allow the Board to agree whether and in what form we want the TPS to develop over the next 1-5 years. Meanwhile, the TPS will continue to work on behalf of its members and the wider transport planning profession and to seek to influence transport policy and practice at national, regional and local level to support the transition to an integrated, accessible, equitable and decarbonised transport system.