

Transport Planning Society

Meeting Date	10 November 2022
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.

Much of my time since my last report given at our September board meeting has been spent supporting further scoping for TP Day 2022, undertaking annual 1:1 meetings with TPS Stakeholder members and planning/attending activities to celebrate our 25th year as a society.

This report also summarises other engagements I've undertaken in the capacity of Chair.

TP Day 2022 Update

Verbal update to be provided by Mark Frost and Alex Bennett (JFG). All plans for TP Day event at ICE now on track.

8 September WSP/TPS Event

After our last board meeting we had an excellent in person and hybrid session hosted at WSPs Birmingham Office. I was particularly taken by the work undertaken to deliver the Birmingham Clean Air Zone, and the focus given to mitigating impacts of this intervention on more socio-economically disadvantaged residents and those working in the zone.

Recording available here. [Delivering Sustainable Transport in the Context of Major Events and Policy Change - YouTube](#)

13 September – Chair of ICE Transport & Mobility Community Advisory Board

I chaired this session of the ICE's Transport & Mobility Community Advisory Board. It was a light agenda, mainly focussed on exploring how to better communicate the work of the Institute and the CAB. We discussed scan horizon scan piece for 2023 which I was interviewed for. Key themes were the completion of the Transport Bill (now in doubt) bringing Great British Railways into being and the impact that the cost of living will have on the delivery and maintenance of infrastructure. I made the point that active travel played a role in reducing the cost of mobility – a well placed cycle lane that enables more people to travel by bike plays a useful role in reducing cost of accessing jobs and services. I also highlighted the growing focus that needed to be put on climate resilience, given the

increasing likelihood and severity of extreme weather events. This is due to be presented at an event at ICE on 12 December.

29 September – Campaign for Better Transport ‘Pay As You Drive’ Road User Charging Event

I attended this event on behalf of TPS, to mark the launch of this new report from CBT, available here: [Pay-as-you-drive Report September 2022 \(bettertransport.org.uk\)](https://www.bettertransport.org.uk/reports/pay-as-you-drive-report-september-2022)

Some reflections in this post here:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/fernconsultingltd_publicperceptions-roadusercharging-evs-activity-6981231660650348544-Wv5j?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

I also enjoyed a useful catch with John Dales, from the consultancy Urban Movement and ex TPS chair after this event. We discussed the evolution of Transport Planning Day, the 25th anniversary celebrations and ways to develop TPS’s influence – a conversation that continued at the event on 20/10.

30 September – PMG meeting with CIHT

We had our twice annual meet up with CIHT to discuss all things TPP and PDS. This is a coordination and decision making board where we discuss funding and costs, amongst other things like gender split and promotions. In short, the qualifications continue to be going from strength to strength. Great in particular to hear Keith being able to put forward the excellent work on internationalising the PDS.

6 October – TPS Event: David Metz book launch

I enjoyed chairing this session with David Metz presenting findings set out on his new book ‘Good to go?’ followed up by a panel discussion involving Anna Rothnie, Jillian Anable and Steve Gooding.

Full recording available here: [Good to Go? Decarbonising Travel After the Pandemic - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

My main take home was perhaps a slight recalibration on the importance that different transport interventions play in delivering decarbonisation. In particular, it felt like there needed to be a much more important role given to in tackling car ownership and supporting more shared mobility (ideally by efficiently used EVs). Given most emissions come from longer car trips that may not be suitable for shifting onto sustainable modes en-mass, making car use as efficient as possible (including reducing embodied carbon in the manufacture of new EVs) seems key. I also agreed with David that there should be a bigger role in using digital route navigation tools to help optimise the use of the existing network better, and so potentially reduce the need for expansion.

David and I shared a few further conversations on issues raised in his book which we intend to turn into a blog, see draft Appendix 1.

10 October – Ioki briefing session

I met with the company Ioki (part of DB railways) to discuss potential stakeholder membership, and also supporting Transport Planning Day.

13 October – Systra briefing session (new tech lead)

I met with Jorgen Pedersen, Sector Director, Transport Technologies at Systra to discuss Transport Planning implications of emerging technologies, particularly CAVs. This led to him writing a blog for us, available here: [CAV – The coming of age? \(tps.org.uk\)](https://www.tps.org.uk/blog/2022/10/13/CAV-The-coming-of-age/)

13 October – Localis briefing on decarbonisation pathways for District Councils Network

I partook in roundtable discussing decarbonisation pathways for delivering ‘clean local growth’, with a particular focus on transport. We discussed the need to work with the community to make the case for the need to change, and for local authorities to utilise all possible levers. I particularly noted the need for development of progressive parking policies, and also highlighted the importance of the enacting of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 for England in allowing more sensitive and targeted traffic management schemes to be implemented (for example see:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/fernconsultingltd_oxford-set-to-cut-its-famous-traffic-jams-activity-6990327710845722624-uU8l?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop).

20 October – TPS 25th Anniversary Dinner

This was an enjoyable event to mark our 25th anniversary. The actual evening consisted of a dinner and a roundtable at ICE. It was a really rich discussion with lots of excellent ideas for what we need to do as a society to increase our influence. A full summary of the discussion will be provided at the next board meeting. We also got all the chairs to contribute 500 word blogs on the subject, which JFG have brought together into anthology for further publication (see draft at Appendix 2).

1 Nov – ICE Inaugural Presidential Lecture

On 1 November I attended the inauguration of Keith Powell as new ICE President for coming year, taking over from Ed McCann. Keith did a heartfelt speech on the need to do more to ensure public safety in the use of infrastructure. He is also looking to focus on how to best embed the Sustainable Development Goals into profession practice.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/fernconsultingltd_sustainabledevelopmentgoals-decarbonisation-activity-6993304383153131520-Hsk9?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

2 November – Regular DfT/CIHT/RTPI catch up.

This is a regular catch up of DfT and the institutions, with a focus on land use planning. Key takeaways from me were the likely release of new LTP guidance later this year, and ongoing efforts between DfT and DLUC to develop Manual for Streets into an effective tool, ready to be embedded in next version of the NPPF. There is also exciting ongoing work being led by Connected Places Catapult to develop a form of PTAL assessment for England. More information to follow, likely early 2023.

Appendix 1 – Follow up blog post with David Metz

1. You spoke a lot about the power of digital navigation tools to influence the use of the network, particularly as their ubiquity has grown so much in recent years and is likely approaching saturation levels. A few questions on this.
 - a. You note the power of the ‘estimated time of arrival’ as a function in both providing reassurance and likely increasing satisfaction in the road network for users who typically value reliability over speed. Are you aware of the levels of accuracy that these systems achieve and what may influence that? Are there any independent studies seeking to verify this?

>> My recent paper discusses the impact of Digital Navigation <https://ucl.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.14324/111.444/ucloe.000034> I am not aware of any studies of the relative accuracy of ETAs from different DN providers. But there is a very interesting paper from DeepMind, an associate business of Google <https://www.arxiv-vanity.com/papers/2108.11482/>

- b. I’m very interested in the idea of this being not just a tool for optimising route choice but also in influencing travel behaviour more fundamentally, e.g. nudging people to travel at different times, by different routes and even different modes. Perhaps even building in a ‘social impact score’ where your choice could be optimised to reduce impacts on other road users (e.g. avoiding residential roads). How far do you think this could be pushed? Does it have more applicability for less frequent/habitual leisure vs commuter trips do you think?

>> I agree that using DN to nudge people to make better use of the road network would be well worth exploring. There is relevant traffic theory – Wardrop’s two equilibria – which I am exploring https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Glen_Wardrop

- c. We discussed the fact that people don’t really think of their being a cost/mile of motoring at present. But via fuel duty, parking, and perhaps a clever apportionment of sunk costs, there is. Could these be effectively built into these sort of systems to start getting some of the gains that road user charging promises?

>> One could imagine a DN service that offered lowest fuel cost routing.

- d. Is there a risk that optimisation at a strategic scale could lead to induced traffic?

>> Yes, in that making better use of available capacity would allow more trips to be made. But regulation of DN could prevent use of environmentally unsuitable minor roads.

- e. You noted that there wasn’t a huge level of interest at the DfT level on this. What would you do next to move this on? Transport Select Committee investigation? Policy paper etc with institutions? Do you have any particular insight in how best to incentivise LAs to work with providers (and vice versa)? (Incidentally, as an LA that desperately wanted to work with google etc on this when putting in road closures, it was a complete black box and very difficult to get any real engagement).

>> GoogleMaps seems uptight. But Waze is open to collaboration

<https://www.waze.com/wazeforcities/> And TomTom offers an O/D service

<https://move.tomtom.com/assets/OD%20Analysis%20Product%20Info%20Sheet.pdf>

Not sure how to convert DfT to switch from focussing on investment in new capacity to making better use of existing network. Topic for TPS to pursue perhaps?

2. There’s a good section in your book about changing generational trends for driving behaviour, and whilst the conclusion I took was that I was too early to attribute genuine changes in travel behaviour and mode choice amongst younger people, do you broadly agree that car use in younger populations is different from older age groups? We didn’t get a chance to discuss the idea of how to work with those newly incoming into the market for car trips to influence mode choice, e.g. via regulations like graduated driver licenses, mandating the need for pay/mile insurance provision etc? This would seem an approach that could be less contentious than trying to upend established habits by older car users?

>> Not clear if the trend by younger adult to make less use of the car is long term, or whether it reflects the postponement of entry to adult life, the result of longer education, later child bearing

etc. Also, the pandemic has made car ownership more attractive, but again not clear if this is more than a short-term effect.

3. You raise a number of concerns about relying on journey time savings as a basis for making investment decisions, concerns which are shared by many in the Society and which we have been communicating over many years. The solution you propose is to move towards Access Planning, with a greater focus on observed values of real estate as a way of working out benefits. Putting yourself in the seat of a critic of this approach, what do you think the main problems are and perhaps why it hasn't been deployed to date? Thinking more positively, do you think the push for 15 min neighbourhoods give new life to this agenda, and that this may have a significant impact on travel behaviour in the longer term if embraced and embedded in policy?

>> I am working on a new book for an academic publisher, the core of which is a critique of conventional transport economics and associated modelling. I will need to discuss alternatives, including valuing access benefits and real estate values. I could talk to TPS about emerging findings next year. The problem with 15 minute neighbourhoods is that people move to cities to escape the limited possibilities of villages; that the urban built environment is a given, with much of it valued for visual qualities (conservation areas etc), and is largely in private ownership. So the scope for planners to reduce travel is quite limited.

4. We talked a bit about whether we could ever appraise in common terms the transport benefits of widening a road, putting in a cycle lane, or opening a corner shop in an area that has a deficit of such a service. To a certain extent this is the idea of 'Triple Access Planning'. Whilst this will take a long time to change travel behaviour at scale, it feels necessary to break out of the idea of transport as needing to solve all its own problems, even as we constantly recognise that we are a derived demand. I also note a Rory Sutherland throw away that the best value transport investment may well have been to have bought every resident of the country a Zoom professional licence etc....What innovation in governance could be useful here? For example, I'm told that the Finnish have a single agency for all communications, digital or actual and therefore look at such investments in the round. Could this help in the UK, or is this a red herring?

>> There has been long running debate about whether digital communications could replace travel (as certainly happened during the pandemic) or whether it promotes travel by fostering more extensive social and business networks, whom we like to meet in person from time to time. The jury is out, but the hour a day invariant travel time phenomenon suggests that the total amount of travel may be hard to change.

5. We spoke a lot about the relative role of active travel vs EVs in delivering carbon savings. Whilst it is clear that is a small role, I'm not sure we properly explored the embodied carbon element of EVs. Do you think this changes the equation at all?

>> The implication of Net Zero by 2050 is that everything will be decarbonised by then, including all the materials to make an EV. A difficult task, of course, but big efforts are being made to switch to renewables and hydrogen.

6. I was really interested in the idea of treating the strategic road network as a mature system for optimisation rather than expansion, not unlike its urban counterpart. I wonder what this would look like in practice? Would this mean a proper focus on reliability as a key indicator over overall journey time? I know this was a technique that TfL focussed on during Boris Johnson's term as mayor, however I think the jury is still out on whether it led to any major change of actual approach. Would this mean more managed motorways (by that I mean more the bit or smart motorways that seeks to influence speeds to maintain flow rather than removing hard shoulders)? What do you think a business case for this approach would like? For example, I was particularly taken by your assessment that the impact of induced traffic on safety completely outweighs most safety benefits of new alignments that increase capacity. Could this deliver a positive BCR all on its own? How could reliability be better valued in appraisal? Could it put more focus on demand management, e.g. car occupancy improvements? As someone who led formal objection to the removal of the M4 bus lane, with the suggestion that it was something that could have been morphed into a HOV lane I

always thought this was a missed opportunity - could we do more on this e.g. like High Occupancy toll lanes? Would it support a greater focus on resilience, surely necessary in coming years?

>> I suspect there is much potential to optimise both urban and inter-urban road networks, taking advantage of DN and other digital technologies, although the detailed possibilities are beyond my area of expertise. Generally, well-conceived digital investments are likely to be far more cost-effective in achieving desired outcomes, such as reliability, than civil engineering investments.

7. I have mentioned a number of times that induced traffic will result from a shift to EVs without some replacement for fuel duty, given lower marginal cost of travel. However you think there is likely to be no rebound effect given travel time budget. How certain can you be about this?

>> My analysis is that per capita car use (km/pa) depends mainly on three factors: time available for travel, speed of travel, and household car ownership. None would be much affected by lower fuel costs, so I don't expect to see much of a rebound effect

8. I was very much taken by your assessment that Hen and stag dos are half of flights by young men, a third by young women! I wasn't sure what proportion of total flights that was, but clearly it suggests a possible role in managing demand as well as pursuing technological fixes (particularly whilst we have so many polluting planes in the sky). People have come to expect a right to fly, and so limiting access for all, e.g. by price, when it's actually the comparatively wealthy frequent flyers that cause the majority of emissions feels regressive though. Would a frequent flyer levy help in this situation do you think? As you infer, the economic cost of such a policy could be net positive if money is spent in UK? I also found the Japanese experience of demand plateaus linked to demographics, do you think this sort of demand saturation linked to ageing is properly considered in aviation forecasts?

>> There is scope for managing demand for air travel through taxation, whether APD or fuel tax or extending the carbon trading scheme. APD might depend on how many trips had been made, although higher rates would be born by business users, whose demand might not be very elastic. If we do not add to airport capacity, the eventual capacity constraint would lead to higher charges levied by airports, which would limit demand, particularly from lower value trips like stage parties.

9. It's clear that working from home is higher than pre-pandemic, though your contention is that overall trip making will remain constant to match the travel time budget. Do you fear the replaced commuter trips will be disproportionately car heavy? Do you think the traditional focus on planning for the commute leaves us vulnerable here?

>> Too early to say what the longer term effect of more WFH has on travel patterns. NTS for 2022 should be informative.

10. You mentioned a number of times about the role of parking policy in influencing travel behaviour. What do you think local government could do better here, and how should central government support that? (e.g. workplace parking level support).

>> Parking, both public availability and charges, can be varied incrementally and so may be an easier way of reducing car use than measures that make a bigger impact, eg LTNs. Constraints on kerbside parking can be presented as helping keeping the traffic flowing. You will know better than I whether it would be better for local government to be up-front with parking policy, or low key. It may depend on how secure is the political party in control; introduction of the Nottingham WPL was helped by the fact that Labour felt secure.

11. I was also really taken with the section in the book contrasting the legal basis for clean air vs the economic basis of road safety. Given the striking successes by outfits like Client Earth in pushing action in this space through the courts on clean air, can you see benefits for proponents of vision zero if this also became law?

>> I think Vision Zero would be hard to enforce by law, beyond a 'best endeavours' type of duty. Any legal basis would create opportunities for litigation by activists. The question is whether the economic case for tackling detriments is better than the legal approach. Given the deployment of EVs, I think there was a case for not introducing legally enforceable CAZs in the more marginal cases of air pollution.

12. Roger Geffen made a useful comment during the event I thought on the challenges in tackling car use, congestion. His point was that a congestion charge when coupled with investment in public transport plus reallocation of road space to support active travel does appear to have neutered induced demand in central and inner London to some extent. The key seems to be the interplay of the demand and supply elements. Could this not work on a national basis in terms of road user charging?

>> The congestion charge applies only to a small central zone and the charge is not high enough to deter business users or well off private motorists. What has limited the growth of car use in London has been the road capacity, of which that available for general traffic has been reduced by bike and cycles lanes. At the same time, the population has been growing and there has been investment in rail and buses. So London is a good model for other cities. To limit car use nationally by road user charging would require levels of charge that would be politically difficult to introduce, in my view. Road user charging for EVs probably could not be greater than fuel tax paid by IC vehicles.

13. In your book you make the point that there are no professional standards for modellers. But we do have TPS code of conduct ([Microsoft Word - TPS Code of Conduct 2022](#)). What more should we do on this?

>> You would need a means to enforce the code of conduct. For instance, the actuaries (with whom I have had past involvement and who use complex models) have in place formal standards (eg <https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/c866b1f4-688d-4d0a-9527-64cb8b1e8624/TAS-200-Insurance-Dec-2016.pdf>) and a disciplinary procedure, which is being updated <https://actuaries.org.uk/about-us/governance-and-structure/bye-laws-and-rules/> If a complaint is made about the conduct of an actuary, a panel of experienced practitioners decides whether there has been a shortcoming in relation to the standards.

14. You make the excellent point about EVs embedding inequality in your book. It seemed to me to help make the case for a means tested EV grant? Or a subsidized vehicle available for low income households, enabled by a joint procurement? You see in the energy market joint procurement exercises undertaken by local and regional government to help secure economies of scale and best value. Could the same be done with cars?

>> In the current climate for public expenditure, I would not expect subsidy for EVs to be a priority. We'll have to wait for the second-hand market to grow naturally.

15. There was a striking phrase for me in your book, paraphrased as 'much of our travel isn't necessary, but we like it and so we do it' (p144)'. Do you see any scope for us as policy makers being able to get to a point where we facilitate the necessary, but discourage the optional or discretionary, (or better shift onto sustainable modes)?

>> Not sure that we can usefully make a distinction between necessary travel and optional. Mode choice is discreet, but distance travelled is a function of time and money costs set against value of access to the destination. Mode shift is possible to effect with sticks and carrots, as in London.

16. How hopeful are you that citizen assemblies can cut through the political challenges and deliver an impetus for change? Are these best done at national rather than local level? Or both depending on question?

>> Citizen assemblies can reach sensible conclusions, which can encourage politicians to implement them. But the electorate as a whole do not undergo the process of information gathering and debate from which the assembly participants benefitted, so politicians are inevitably cautious.

Transport Planning Society

Transport Planning Society's 25th Anniversary retrospective

An Ex-chair anthology

Introduction

This year marks 25 years since the inception of the Transport Planning Society (TPS). To celebrate the silver anniversary, the society wanted to hear from its past chairs to see how TPS had grown since its humble beginnings in 1997. We asked them to consider the most important issues they've faced in their careers to date, and what the industry as a whole needs to do to be able to effectively tackle the next 25 years.

Throughout the responses, a resonant theme was the transformative power of transport planning when done well. Good transport planning can drastically improve people's socio-economic conditions in several ways while also helping us realise vital wider policy goals such as Net-Zero, clean air and enabling more physical activity. While different responses touched on a range of topics from enabling more diversity in transport decision making, to digitalisation, to the importance of collaboration across sectors to tackle the root causes of the sectors problems - all were united in understanding the monumental role transport planners will have in shaping society in the coming decades.

As well as the transformative power of transport planning, in their submissions a number of past chairs hit on the essential need to attract, support and develop the next generation of transport planners. It is clear the transport planning profession must find better ways of providing a space that younger professionals can use to develop and raise the profile of the radical ideas that will lead to the substantive change necessary if we are to meet the needs of future generations.

And at the heart of the transport planning profession stands TPS. We hope this anthology gives the reader an insight into our brilliant past chairs, the work which TPS has focused on in the last 25 years, and some ideas for what the profession should focus on looking ahead.

Keith Mitchell – Chair 1999-2001

Keith joined Stantec (formerly PBA) in 1984, was invited into partnership in 1994, and was elected chairman of PBA in 2010 with responsibility for the strategic development of the Practice. Keith then led the growth of the PBA infrastructure and development business as it became part of Stantec in 2017.



Progressive reception

Sitting in the Alan Baxter Gallery in Farringdon, listening to a discussion about road and rail travel trends doesn't immediately appear to be fertile ground for a damascene moment. Little did I know!

The backdrop to this event was the December 2016 publication of the Independent Transport Commission's report "On the Move 2, Recent Trends in road and rail travel: what do they tell us?". In

a world where the prevailing policy assumption was, (still), that overall car use would continue to grow over time and that we should plan for it, we were hearing some evidence that this could be changing. Of most interest to me were the changes in behaviour of young people who were using cars significantly less than the older generation. I remember thinking – hoping even – that this might provide the opportunity to refocus our approach around lower travel demand and local mobility.

It has taken time, but we have begun to see the shift away from car dependency embraced by national policy. The (flawed but nonetheless important) Decarbonising Transport states that: *"We need to move away from transport planning based on predicting future demand to provide capacity ('predict and provide') to planning that sets an outcome communities want to achieve and provides the transport solutions to deliver those outcomes (sometimes referred to as 'vision and validate')*. This approach is reflected in the proposed revisions to DfT Circular 02/2013 and a recent LTP Guidance Bulletin suggests that Vision based planning will also be at the heart of future Local Transport Plans. Next to follow suit will hopefully be the revised NPPF and the National Networks National Policy Statement.

My other memory of that evening arose from a comment from the floor. At the end of a presentation about DfT statistics, a young woman in the audience asked why DfT were reviewing static statistics collated over the previous ten year period, and not making more use of the data on movement that could be secured through internet service providers? It seems obvious now, but systematic and timely digital data collection can seriously enrich our understanding about movement, yet we remain behind the curve in our use of data to inform evidence-based planning and investment decision making.

If we are to truly change our approach to land use and transport planning, we need to find a way of unpicking the misplaced mantra that road building equals economic development, and is therefore a good thing, per se. Data is going to be at the heart of how we do this, but this will need to be aligned with effective engagement [better-places-report.pdf \(stantec.com\)](#). For too long, our profession has professed to know the answers, but failed to convince decision makers that a longer term view is essential.

We need to use data and effective engagement in harness to convince communities, local authorities and elected representatives that there is a better way to build and sustain communities. Only if we do this will developers and promoters be persuaded that there is a need to move away from existing an infrastructure capacity driven model towards a demand management based around local community and mobility services. If we fail to convince communities, the progress now being made will be lost on the altar of short-term political expediency, and we will fail to tackle the challenges of tomorrow or meet the needs of future generations.

Challenging the status-quo

The TPS was hugely innovative when it was founded in 1997 and I'm very proud to have played a small part in getting it established. Early in my career with London Transport I was invited to form part of a small working group, which in consultation with practitioners, concluded that having a professional body that recognized transport planning as a discipline would be a major step forward for our industry. We set up our Board to make that happen and started to bring transport planners together while also building our relationships with other related professions and institutions and taking steps towards building professional accreditation. The TPS provided us with a 'safe space' to share thinking on potentially disruptive and radical policies, challenging the status quo – a few of the early talks included the need to move away from predict and provide approach to infrastructure provision; new interventions such as congestion charging in central London; inclusion of quantification of agglomeration benefits for London projects; consideration of how technology can influence travel patterns ...who'd have thought such things would now be commonplace? We attracted the highest caliber of speakers – leading academics and practitioners and the odd celebrity – in my year as chair alone we had the honour of welcoming Michael Palin, Phil Goodwin and Stephen Glaister, Greg Marsden, Malcolm Buchanan and David Bayliss, Bridget Rosewell to name but a few...

I also have to admit, I had a personal mission – I wanted to find a professional and relevant home, one that wasn't 'stuffy' and where I could share the excitement and dynamism of what I have always felt to be a profession which is intellectually challenging but has a very practical side too. We were also keen to encourage a wide range of people from various disciplines to join us and improve the diversity of our profession and we kept our fees as low as possible, set up the bursary scheme to help attract younger members. We were keen to facilitate fun events as well as learning opportunities so the annual pub quizzes and affordable dinners got going. I was delighted to serve as the first female chair in 2001/2 and it is great to see a continued increase in female and younger members in what had traditionally been a very male-dominated sector. As I recall in those early years we instantly attracted around 400 members/year. This has increased fourfold and is continuing to grow. It has been amazing to see our society go from strength to strength.

Our role and approach as transport planners has changed significantly since our society was set up. There has been a welcome shift away from predict and provide for infrastructure solutions to fix problems, which actually have often created more problems. We are now more focused on the overall objectives to be achieved and on examining more sustainable and integrated solutions in a multi-disciplinary way. We moved from only looking at capturing small time savings for moving people and goods from A to B towards more fully looking at the quality of the journey for the customer and end to end trips and how transport can achieve broader benefits for places and the people who live in them – so not only work trips, but to hospital, school, the evening and night-time economy and getting about at weekends as well as the more sustainable transport of goods.

I've spent much of my career shaping transport plans and strategy in London – progressing from capacity planning on the tube to sustainable integrated planning in major redevelopment areas but more latterly also developing integrated strategy and policies which bring improvements to health, accessibility, air quality and wellbeing rather solely monetizable benefits through time savings. In my more recent experience with Jacobs heading up their transport planning strategy team working across the country and internationally, this shift in approach is also now much more common-place across our profession. In many of our cities we also have a more joined up land use and transport planning process – for example we have the London Plan and a joined up transport strategy in London, putting sustainable travel, and transport planning, at the heart of planning policy.

Looking forward, a continued focus on mode shift to more space and carbon-efficient forms of travel, helping to underpin future sustainability of our urban areas, is vital in working toward our carbon reduction targets. Also, with the UK population expected to grow by several million over the next few decades, and with a shortage of affordable housing, it's critical we get land use and transport planning right. If we do, it will provide benefits in terms of creating well-located homes and communities and reduced car use for decades to come.

However, with challenges such as COVID and the cost of living crisis, I do have concerns that we are losing ground on the good work that has been done in recent years on walking, cycling and affordable public transport. England lacks a joined-up multi-modal transport strategy, and we are struggling to demonstrably tackle climate change. In my current role as Director of Strategy with Great British Railways Transition Team we have a fantastic opportunity to bring a more integrated approach to transport planning for the UK's railway, working with regional partners to enable the railway to more fully fulfil its potential as the backbone of the UK transport network and in doing so meet customers' needs, improve financial sustainability as well as wider Government objectives for economic growth, connectivity and the environmental. I am hugely impressed with the transport planning capability based in the many local and regional authorities around the country, keen to work with me and my team to improve the railway's integration with other transport modes and with local land use plans. This is why I joined the team; I believe we will have a big impact, and genuinely change things for the better by helping to support a more joined up approach to spatial and transport planning.

In my view transport planners need to continue, as we did in the early days of the TPS, sharing experiences, challenging the status quo and welcoming innovation. We should be clear on the vital role we can play in improving transport to support local, regional and national goals such as decarbonisation, improved sustainable connectivity and economic growth, health and well-being outcomes. We need to use our voice and wealth of experience built up over the last twenty-five years to help shape the future planning of our cities and country. In doing this we remain relevant and will continue to attract new professionals to join and enjoy this brilliant profession we're all part of.

Glenn Lyons – Chair 2002-2003

Glenn is the Mott MacDonald Professor of Future Mobility at the University of the West of England, Bristol. With a career-long focus on understanding and influencing travel behaviour in the context of continuing social and technological change, Glenn specialises now in vision-led strategic planning for an uncertain world in the face of a climate emergency. For the last year he has been a member of the Wales Roads Review Panel.



Hyperlink not Hyperloop

Ah, the heady days of 1997. A landslide election victory for a new Labour Government in the UK that would bring us an integrated transport white paper and a new optimism that we were well and truly ready to move on from a car dependent society and roadbuilding. It's 25 years since the Transport Planning Society was founded and here we are again. Much of what we aspire to achieve in transport planning is dictated by politics and power – which I'll come back to.

But first to what has in my view been the biggest innovation to shape our sector since TPS began – the hyperlink and the emergence of the world wide web and digital connectivity. In 1997 less than 1 in 10 households had Internet access, and access typically meant a meagre 56k modem. The digital age has since collided and merged with the motor age. Travel is a derived demand - derived from the need or desire to access people, goods, employment, services and opportunities. Digital connectivity has, underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, emphatically become the third leg of the 'triple access' stool, assuming its place alongside physical mobility and spatial proximity. It has transformed how society communicates, and how knowledge is shared and opinions are influenced; it has significantly affected where, when and how we work, shop and play. Over the lifespan of the TPS, the digital age has pervaded people's lives and holds the promise of much more change to come, in the face of a climate emergency.

As a transport planner I hope to see 'Triple Access Planning' shaping a better future in the years ahead where a rebalancing of physical mobility, spatial proximity and digital connectivity helps society tread more lightly on the planet. Unfortunately, and sorry if I sound cynical, in my 20+ years as a TPS member I have come to understand the stark reality: experts have limited agency alone to shape the future of transport and society in the interests of people and planet. Instead shaping the future is driven considerably by pursuit of power and profit, through the medium of politics and the mainstream media. To this has been added a new twist of the digital age: social media. The future of transport lies not only in changing travel behaviours, but in changing behaviours of voters, influencers, and politicians.

I view the past, present and future of the TPS as a place for constructive challenge – a community of fellow professionals where there is encouragement to question orthodoxy, and a willingness to foster lively debate on the wicked problems we face and to bring a diversity of perspectives to bear. The next 25 years of the TPS will take us close to 2050. Will we then be wishing we had woken up sooner, and woken others up sooner, to seriously addressing climate change? What we can all help ensure is that TPS continues to stand up, Look Up, and be counted. Onwards!

Richard Walker – Chair 2003-2005

Richard Walker is a geographer and town planner with over 30 years' experience in transport planning. After 10 years at consultancy Colin Buchanan and Partners, he has since worked in the public sector at the Greater London Authority, Strategic Rail Authority, South East England Regional Assembly and, since 2010, at the Department for Transport where he is currently a transport planning adviser in the Local Transport Directorate. In 2020 and 2021 he was on secondment as a Visiting Research Fellow to the DecarboN8 network based at the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds.



Kicking the addiction to fossil fuels

For a quarter of a century TPS transport planners have tried to help balance our needs and desires for mobility with those for healthy, sociable lifestyles and nicer, non-traffic-choked places to live in, whilst also saving the planet. We have had some successes, though not in truth as many as we would have liked. But UK transport and land use planning have failed to do their bit for carbon emissions reduction. Over 25 years we have frivolously burned through far too much of our fair share of the fossil carbon it was safe to put up into the atmosphere.

As Winston Churchill put it in 1936: "The era of procrastination, of half measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays, is coming to a close. In its place, we are now entering the period of consequences." In 2022, nobody sounds the alarm about the challenges facing us, and our current failure to respond properly to them, more plainly than the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres.

What does this mean for the next 25 years of transport planning? There is no route to kicking our fatal addiction to fossil fuels at the necessary pace that does not involve lifestyle change and proactive spatial planning. For transport that means reducing car and lorry mileage and tackling frequent flying. For planning it means nurturing places to live that people can be happy and thrive in, rather than forever be travelling to and from. And sadly, it also means preparing for resilience against the coming brutal and frightening extremes that can no longer be avoided.

In the run-up to the United Nations' COP26 in 2021 I was privileged to work with the DecarboN8 team at Leeds University to develop a brief transport policy-maker's guide to climate action and I believe the key problems, principles and solutions that guide sets out remain valid.

Over 25 years TPS transport planners have developed the ideas, tools and techniques society now needs – and have done a good job of putting them into a framework for professional accreditation – but have stayed weak on advocacy and real political and economic influence, despite the clear social, environmental and economic win-win-win we can offer.

TPS must continue to develop and share what our profession has to offer, and now is the time for TPS to rediscover some of its radical edge, especially by providing young transport planners with a home and a platform to offer society clear messages and attractive solutions to address the challenges of the coming decades.

Martin Tugwell – Chair 2005-2007

Martin leads Transport for the North as England's first Sub-national Transport Body, giving the North a strong, unified and determined voice on transport investment to benefit the region. Immediately prior to joining Transport for the North, Martin was Director for England's Economic Heartland (EEH) – one of England's 7 Sub-national Transport Bodies. Here, he led the creation of the EEH Transport Strategy – Connecting People, Transforming Journeys. Martin is a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow and past President of the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) and a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). He is also a Trustee of the CIHT.



Reducing the need to travel

Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it, which is why anniversaries are used as a moment for reflection. And so, on the 25th anniversary of the Transport Planning Society where do we stand as a profession?

It's 30 years since we hailed the Brundtland definition of 'sustainable development'. Coming as it did shortly after Phil Goodwin's challenge to the transport orthodoxy, this was an optimism that we could, would do things differently. 'Travel is a derived demand' was used by one and all as evidence that they understood the need for the change and that they wanted to make it happen. So how have we done?

Whilst we might cite the need to change travel demand, too often our approach is still focused on managing the symptom rather than tackle its root cause. Discussions about integrating transport and land use planning quickly become focused on new development. And yet most of the demand for services and opportunities already exists: a consequence of the choices that we've made based on a range of factors relating to our lives, of which transport is but one.

A key lesson from the pandemic is there is nothing immutable about the need to travel nor about the way we access services and opportunities. Faced with the need to do things differently, businesses (both public and private) quickly adapted: we adapted. In some instances, this represented no more than an acceleration of existing trends. The long-standing assumption that increased economic activity inevitably leads to an increase in car-based traffic was seen to be the grandest example of a received wisdom left unchallenged.

The pandemic also reminded us we must give freight and logistics sector the weight that our economy and society require.

We've seen great strides made in terms of the availability and use of data: I've lost count of the number of projects focused on using data to 'unlock' new solutions. And yet we have singularly failed to apply data insights in the way tech-focused companies do when they shape the choices we make elsewhere in our daily lives.

And herein lies one of the greatest contradictions that we have yet to come to terms with: that a truly sustainable transport system is one that reduces the need to travel. We may be experts in developing business cases that make the case for more investment in transport, and yet we need to be as skilled in understanding the operating model for businesses and understand how changes in that might help reduce the need for travel – it's the difference between treating the symptom (travel to/from a place) with the need to treat the root cause (gaining access to a service).

Yes, travel is a derived demand. But we must also recognise that the way we access services and opportunities continues to change. We must broaden our understanding of business operating models and embrace the use scenarios to define an achievable vision that matches our ambition, but which is also achievable.

Our solutions must be affordable and therefore deliverable. And we must consider affordability from the user perspective. Large sections of our communities already struggle to meet their travel costs:

advocating solutions that in isolation are more expensive (either in cost or time) will run the risk of our ability to pay for transport as a social issue.

And we must become comfortable understanding and advocating the need for investment in infrastructure beyond transport: progress in electrifying our transport system is dependent upon a step change in investment in energy generation and distribution systems.

Recent years have reminded us all too starkly of the consequence of failing to achieve the change we identified 25 years ago: we must accelerate the pace of change if our legacy to future generations is to be a truly sustainable transport system.

Keith Buchan – Chair 2011-2013

Keith Buchan has over 30 years' experience in transport planning including work on strategic policy development, objectives led assessment, traffic restraint, "new generation" bus priority, heavy vehicle studies and the 2008 and 2018 reports on how the UK could meet its carbon reduction targets. From 2011 to 2013 he was Chair of the Transport Planning Society and is now their Director for Skills.



Empathy and engagement

Reflecting on the important changes in transport planning since 1997 it's easy to think of innovations in technology like multi modal travel apps, smarter bus priority or autonomous vehicles. Although AVs might just be, like road pricing, something that will be forever definitely going to happen in the next 10 years....

My own, entirely objective of course, favourite is that TPS itself flourished and, more importantly, acted as a home for transport planners and an influencer on other linked professions. The old adage that planners had vision and transport engineers did the numbers had some truth from the sixties into the nineties. The different idea that numbers and vision could work together is at the heart of transport planning – it holds the ring between conflicting interests but also conflicting disciplines. Another distinguishing feature is that it is a listening profession – that's why we put so much emphasis on empathy and engagement not just consultation on what someone has already decided, or worse what the black box tells us is the "preferred option".

Of course, to chuck the evidence baby out with the contemptuousness bathwater would be another disaster and this is where a modern multi-disciplinary profession like transport planning can provide answers. I say "can" because, in the next 25 years, we need to do better. Finally shake off the "guns for hire" image – we've got so good at understanding forecasting, modelling and economics that we can produce BCRs to order to 2 decimal places. I've even been at conferences where people have boasted about it. In the end that only leads to profound public cynicism and, inevitably, rejection of all evidence as partial. There's plenty of disastrous examples of that in the wider world as well as transport. We have to work to gain respect and public confidence.

Why is this important? It is simply because we face a number of problems which are deep rooted and must be faced openly and honestly. Carbon emissions is an obvious example but existing social divisions, amplified by the impact of technology on work and leisure are problems in plain sight with too little analysis and too much position rhetoric. Our first step must be to explain the transport parts of the crisis calmly and properly and keep doing so despite whatever the press and now twitter can throw at us.

In the carbon case this is essential because the general public is not being told the truth about what is happening. For example, there is no evidence that electrifying cars will alone solve our problems. Apart from being too late, with today's power generation it's probably better to keep older cars going than replace them prematurely with EVs. The next step is not to lecture people about how they should travel but to engage them and learn from them about how to change. Some of the recent Covid transport schemes show the need to genuinely engage. Only then will we all find out how on earth we are going to get through the next decade, let alone 25 years.

Nick Richardson – Chair 2013-2015

Nick Richardson has been involved with geography, planning and transport for over thirty years, working for Bedfordshire and Hampshire County Councils then MVA Consultancy. He is currently Technical Principal at Mott MacDonald with extensive experience of transport planning projects and also specialist bus and rapid transit proposals. He is a Chartered Transport Planning Professional and Chartered Geographer and writes a fortnightly column for 'Passenger Transport' magazine.



Empowerment and demand management

Empowerment has been the key issue throughout my career with individuals now understanding the transport options available to them better than ever before. This has arisen from the rapid spread of technology in the form of smart phones and other media, and innovation arising from the communications sector being adapted for transport purposes. This enables anyone who is connected to find out bus, coach and train times, disruptions, ticket prices, options to hire a scooter, best routes to navigate the road network and so on. Information continues to expand to identify detailed walking routes, the space available on bus services etc. to a point where the consumer is sometimes better placed than the transport provider regarding up-to-the-minute information. Alongside the rise in information, ticketing is now possible in the form of contactless card and mobile phone payments, something that would have been fantasy a few years ago.

However, there has been an erosion of intuition. Individuals no longer need to know which direction to head for because they have a device that can tell them; their sense of geography is diminished. A satnav will take them to where they want to be and their route can be identified, analysed and downloaded. Therefore, the aspirations for making journeys are changed and become more dependent on third party information rather than engrained knowledge. This depletion is the inevitable result of becoming dependant on technology; the significance of this is that different people have different needs and opportunities because smart phones and other media are not universal. Determining journey options, paying with cash, purchasing a paper ticket and using static signing similar may be essential for some transport consumers, even if they become the minority. Ensuring that the benefits of technology are universal is a significant challenge.

Looking ahead to the next 25 years, it is not yet fully accepted that the demand for travel often exceeds supply and that it is neither feasible or desirable to expand supply to satisfy that demand. This covers every aspect of transport from walking and cycling to rail and road provision. The Covid-19 pandemic offered some opportunities in that the traditional morning peak, so loved by transport planners, has receded. This has major benefits to providers in that assets are used more productively and shows that adaptation to changing circumstances is possible. Changes to working and shopping habits in particular reflect changes to society's needs. What has become clear is that road capacity need not expand, and better management is needed. Spreading demand and making more efficient use of vehicles is inevitable if delays are to be avoided; this shifts the debate from personalised transport to mass transit in most urban contexts. The greatest threat is decision-makers who cannot deal with change and therefore have no realistic vision for the future.

Decide and provide – deciding on a sustainable future

I don't know about you, but, whenever I hear a particular year mentioned, there's almost always a specific event, holiday, film or song that comes to my mind; and the event I most closely associate with 1997 – the year the TPS came into being – is Labour's remarkable election victory under Tony Blair. Some of you may recall – perhaps with a cringe (I wouldn't blame you) – that the unofficial theme of the Labour campaign was D:Ream's 'Things Can Only Get Better'.

Being a naturally glass-half-full person, I may not be the most reliable guide as to whether 'things' have indeed got better – in the field of Transport Planning – since 1997, but I would personally give it a resounding Yes! Indeed, I've found it very hard to pick just one thing out of so many. So, I've gone for two. The first – which relates to a topic especially close to my heart – was the publication, in 2007, of the first Manual for Streets. This required us to stop thinking of highways only in terms of their relative importance as traffic distributors – a blinkered approach which blighted my first couple of decades as a transport planner – and made us consider their other 'place' functions.

The second thing I'll pick out is the 2021 publication of 'Decide and Provide' (D & P) Guidance by the TRICS consortium. That the 'trip generation bible' should advocate an approach that is vision-led, not forecast-led ('Predict and Provide' (P&P), is almost as revolutionary as it is extremely welcome. As Henry Ford is usually credited with saying, 'If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got'; and we badly need D&P to get us out of the mess that P&P got us into.

But, did I say two things? Like the Cardinal in Monty Python's Spanish Inquisition sketch, I meant three. And this is the simple but important fact that, since the TPS was founded, cycling has been rediscovered as a legitimate and necessary form of everyday transport; emerging from the dark decades in which it had been relegated to something only done by kids and sporty types.

Looking to the future, while the potential of new technologies can be seductive, I'd like to focus on a vital area of change that the profession, and the TPS in particular, has within its own hands. What struck me most during my time as TPS Chair was the great and pressing need for those who work in our field to be far more representative of those on whose behalf they're working: people. And the more I've thought of this challenge, the more it's clear to me that if we wait until young people are at university before we try to influence their career choices, that will in many cases be too late. We need to think of how best to introduce teenagers to transport planning in schools and colleges; and perhaps we should start even earlier.

Lynda Addison - Chair 2017-2019

Lynda chaired the Sustainable Transport Panel of CIHT until 2021. Lynda is a member of the Foundation for Integrated Transport's Steering Group on Transport and New Homes and is a Policy Associate to The Campaign for Better Transport. She received an OBE for services to planning in 2006. Following 30 years in local government she established an award-winning consultancy, Addison & Associates, after leaving Hounslow, where she was Director of Planning and Transport. Lynda was an English Heritage Commissioner and Visiting Professor in Planning at the University of Westminster, a former Trustee of Living Streets and the TCPA, and sat on the Board of Paddington BID. She is now an External Examiner in Transport Planning at the University of Westminster.



Behaviour change

We face an enormous challenge as a society. The challenge is not only technical but also one of scale, scope, speed, and uncertainty. Individuals, politicians, and businesses all need to think and act differently and now. History demonstrates that delivering fundamental change is slow without some catastrophic event. Notwithstanding substantial and growing evidence on climate change over the last 30 years, by and large, politicians and society have not responded effectively. How can we change that situation as we need to do so and fast?

Transport planners are working within the core area requiring action. Their ability to persuade people to change behaviour, including politicians, will be critical. The nature of travel must change as well as its funding and both are in themselves complex. But are both fundamental to responding to the impact of climate change. Working collaboratively is critical to this challenge but so also are the strategic, analytical, and technical skills of transport planners.

Looking backwards my focus has been on ensuring that the driver of travel, the location of development, works hand in glove with the provision of transport; that places are supported not dominated by transport, and that people can walk to local facilities including public transport. This has been and still is a core issue which should have been resolved - as distinct from getting worse. Transport planners as such did not exist as a profession then so the establishment of a professional body with clear training and qualifications is critical. Re-enforcing this critical role was a key driver in the establishment of the first Transport Planning Day under my watch as Chair.

Looking forwards, changing attitudes and behaviours is probably the most difficult challenge. These affect the government funding provided, the legislative and policy framework, the decisions made by businesses and investors, as well as the day-to-day choices people make about where they live, work, shop and how they interconnect. The recent work with the Royal College of Art (Our Future Towns), partly funded by the TPS, has demonstrated how challenging this is going to be. It will require time as well as substantial resourcing, and working in partnership with communities, supporting them with clearly articulated locally-based evidence. This is a fundamentally different approach to the consultation and engagement processes currently pursued. Its focus is supporting people and seeking to change their "hearts and minds" through increased knowledge and understanding. Whatever the technical solutions we need to take people with us, including politicians, who decide funding and policy. Both a current and a past problem has been a failure to convince decision-makers of the need for radical change urgently. Even now, notwithstanding the evidence of the severity of climate change, across the country and the world, there is a reluctance to embrace and drive the scale and nature of change urgently required – not surprisingly few politicians feel able to make the nature of decisions needed given the likely public reaction.

A key issue for the transport planning industry now is how to support the political decision-makers to make difficult and unpopular decisions. The current political climate does not bode well in this respect.

Stephen Bennett – Chair 2019 – 2021

Stephen Bennett is a Chartered Transport Planner with over 25 years' experience in sustainable transport. He is a Director of Transport Consulting in Arup, based in London, and specialises in transport policy and strategy. He also leads on Transport Decarbonisation in the firm. Stephen is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. He is a member of the Transport Planning Society and was Chair from 2019 to 2021, for which he received the Transport Planner of the Year award in 2021.



Developing the transport planning profession

My favourite phrase at the moment is that there is no crisis facing us that cannot be addressed by good quality transport planning. Whether it's the cost of living, climate change, public health, or inequality and exclusion, an affordable, sustainable, healthy and equitable transport system can really make a difference and improve people's quality of life. And that's why I am delighted to see the Transport Planning Society reach this incredible milestone of 25 years old (a quarter of a century!) and very encouraging to see it going from strength to strength.

So what's been behind this success? In my view, it has been the development of transport planning as a distinct profession and the emphasis on a broad range of skills, from strategic thinking, awareness of emerging trends, and stakeholder engagement to specific technical skills in appraisal of schemes, data analytics and modelling, and decarbonisation. Transport is a complex system, and transport planners have to respond to this with a range of a unique set of broad and deep skills that reflect this.

There have been a number of developments that have demonstrated this: the progress in sophisticated data analytics and modelling that gives increasingly detailed insights into our transport systems and how proposed interventions might affect the system, with the use of mobile phone data and agent-based models enhancing our capabilities further. The focus on active travel and healthy streets has created a number of high-quality places for our communities, with roadspace allocated in a more balanced way to enable safe and healthy means of transport that create economic activity and vibrant neighbourhoods. And the shift from 'predict and provide' approaches to 'vision and validate' strategies has been hugely significant, as we recognise the mistakes of the past and create plans that are delivering the outcomes we want, rather than the unintended consequences of planning for increasing amounts of travel by private car.

The profession has made excellent progress in the last quarter of a century and we're on the right track, but things are not changing as quickly as they should, and we often see setbacks in policy or local delivery. So what needs to happen in the next 25 years to ensure we can tackle the challenges of tomorrow and meet the needs of future generations? Here's a few thoughts what transport planners can do:

Engage with the political debate – whilst we've been talking about sustainable transport for many years, progress has been slow, in my view largely due to national and local decision-making. I am not suggesting we all go into politics, but we need to engage more with decision-makers, to bring persuasive arguments and undisputable evidence in favour of the schemes and policies we know are needed for our communities.

Collaborate with each other, and other professions – I am doing an increasing amount of work in transport decarbonisation and find that it requires a whole range of disciplines to provide the best solutions: transport planners, energy specialists, vehicle technologists, masterplanners, commercial advisers, infrastructure specialists, and so on. So whilst we are a distinct profession, it's important that we integrate and collaborate to achieve our goals.

Continuously develop your professional skills – the TPS has developed a comprehensive and robust professional development scheme from the PDS to the TPP, which now has chartered status, to ensure we stay up to date with the right skills – you have no excuse not to.

Support the TPS! – over the years the Society has successfully provided a forum for transport planners to develop and grow as a profession – I am proud to have played a small part in its history, and here's to another 25 years of success!

Peter Stonham – Co Founder

Peter Stonham studied transport at Salford University and has researched, written and spoken about the subject for more than 30 years. He is editorial director of Landor Group, which he founded, and led the launch and development of Local Transport Today magazine and other specialist publications, events and online networks. He worked with Richard Cuthbert and David Bayliss in the early 1990s to create the Transport Planning Society and secure the support of the four sponsoring institutions, serving on the TPS board for its first six years.



A collective seam of knowledge and understanding

For me, the most important original and continuing issue evident prior to, at the beginning of, and ever since the formation of TPS, is the locus, perspective and scope of the professional role that 'transport planners' should play. The breadth of this view is ever-widening, and indeed it sometimes feels that just thinking about transport on its own is a potentially big mistake.

It is easy to be concerned with the detail of schemes, modes and particular transport needs and problem areas, and miss the bigger picture. In my view, the Transport Planner's perspective should always embrace the widest possible context- even if just being run as a thought check alongside more specific tasks.

Right from the start, the founders of TPS, of which I was one, were aware of the need to bring together the Civil Engineers, Spatial Planners, Transport Operators and Infrastructure Managers from the four sponsoring institutions, and to take a wider view than any one of them could alone- and add others with further horizons to the mix, be they technologists, environmentalists, social scientists, economists, entrepreneurs, health practitioners, data analysts and more.

The point was to enrich understanding and forge a new multi-dimensional collective seam of knowledge and understanding.

Transport, as much as almost any sector – and more than most- always needs to find the balance between potentially conflicting interests and outcomes, and between the desirable, feasible, responsible and sustainable. If 'providing transport' were once just a matter of hacking a path through the forest, or across the plain, or designing a machine to get from A to B, it certainly isn't now. As transport planners we should intuitively realise that all actions have consequences, and first, second and third order effects – some of which may be very difficult to readily spot, and which go far beyond the immediate transport context.

The allocation of finite resources means not everyone can have everything they want, and where the benefits and costs fall is a decision someone in a position of power or authority, must make (and justify). And now, more than ever before, acknowledge that the provision of transport is neither necessarily the only, or best, way to meet a need or solve a problem. And, in fact may well bring many new impacts, by making, or allowing, something bad, as well as good, to happen.

If the last 25 years have taught us anything, it is surely that it is simply not possible to identify, over a period of time, what the 'most important issue' has been, or what the 'right solution' will be. In looking forward, what we need most as professionals is a flexible and resilient framework of thought and judgement that helps us best consider, analyse and address whatever is the scenario or problem we are examining at the time, in the broadest possible context.

As a colleague said, on reading though my draft of this for his own take on things, "I was hoping you would say the most important innovation needs to be the acknowledgement that we are not the centre of the universe and am therefore very pleased you have done so".

But he added, and I certainly very much agree, that though decisions on the allocation of resources are ultimately political and not technical, and it is important to know we are not in position of authority, "We can jolly well influence the mood music!" That would indeed make an excellent and pragmatic objective for TPS going forward.