

Transport Planning Society

The Green Book Review and what this means for transport business cases.

A think piece from the Transport Planning Society's Governance, Appraisal and Business Case Modelling policy group

About the Transport Planning Society

[The Transport Planning Society \(TPS\)](#) is the only professional body focusing entirely on transport planning in the UK. The aim of the Society is to raise the profile of transport planning and chart a course for the profession.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Green Book Review: Six Actions and Our Recommendations	2
Insufficient Emphasis on Place-Based Objectives	4
Ineffectiveness at Assessing Transformational Change	8
Continued Over-Emphasis on BCRs in Decision Making	11
Overly Long and Complicated Guidance	19
Inadequate Capacity and Capability Across the Public Sector	22
Poor Transparency of Government Business Cases	24
About the Transport Planning Society	24

Executive Summary

Good business cases are integral to evidence-based decision making. Clearly defining objectives and a case for change, they provide a framework for the development and assessment of alternative options. They set out how the preferred option will deliver value for money. They establish how the intervention will be funded and financed, and how it will be delivered. They are the starting point for ex post evaluation and the lesson learning that comes from this. They promote transparency and accountability. A good business case supports good decision making.

The Green Book is the government's guidance on business cases. Updated from time-to-time, the Green Book's history stretches back well over half a century. However, in recent years the Green Book has been criticised as being inflexible and not supporting the development and implementation of interventions necessary to further government objectives such as promoting economic growth in the UK's less well-off areas. In June 2025 the government published its latest review of the Green Book with the promise that a new version of the Green Book will be available in early 2026. This paper is the TPS's commentary on the six actions set out in the June 2025 Green Book Review.

Central to this paper is the recognition that for the day-to-day work of most business case practitioners, it is not the Green Book itself that is important but rather it is how it is reflected in the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), Value for Money Framework and wider suite of business case guidance. Taking each Green Book Review action in turn, this paper sets out recommendations to the DfT on how it should implement the Green Book Review's actions in ways that encourage and facilitate practitioners to change their ways of working.

Green Book Review: Six Actions and Our Recommendations

Insufficient Emphasis on Place-Based Objectives:

- Working with other government departments, DfT should produce guidance on Place-Based Business Cases (PBBCs), including their relationship with Single Project Business Cases (SPBCs).
- Clarity is needed on how PBBCs relate to and add to what will be covered by Local Growth Frameworks (LGFs).
- Guidance is needed on how PBBCs should be considered when developing a view on a constituent scheme's Value for Money (VfM) and in particular, the weight that should be given to "policy on" scenarios.
- The temptation to retrofit PBBCs to existing plans and programmes should be avoided.

Ineffectiveness at Assessing Transformational Change:

- DfT needs to develop its definition of what makes a transport project transformational. Definitions should be quantified and evidence-based.
- Guidance on the form and content of the Economic Narrative (TAG Unit A2.1) should be developed, both in general and to cover transformational projects.
- DfT should consider if and how programmes of schemes can be considered as transformational even if individual projects within the programme are not – can a programme of cross-sectoral interventions covered by a PBBC be considered transformational?
- DfT should develop its Supplementary Economic Model guidance to explicitly consider transformational schemes and consider whether such modelling should be a prerequisite for such schemes.

- Rather than looking to changes to the discount rate to capture the impacts of transformational projects, DfT should focus on developing better approaches to capture residual values as the end of the appraisal period.

Continued Over-Emphasis on BCRs in Decision Making

- DfT should work with practitioners to better embed performance against objectives into the scheme development process and the assessment of VfM.

Overly Long and Complicated Guidance

- DfT should take the opportunity afforded by a new shorter and more focussed Green Book to look again at its own suite of guidance and find the opportunities for simplification and to address duplication. A focus should be on the option development process.
- DfT should urgently develop guidance that codifies what application of the proportionality principle means in practice.
- DfT should develop guidance for light touch business cases for relatively low cost and low impact interventions.
- DfT should develop a simple guide to the application of the Options Filter Framework to transport interventions.
- DfT should withdraw or develop a successor to the Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST).

Inadequate Capacity and Capability Across the Public Sector

- Working with the profession, DfT should develop transport business case training for Senior Responsible Offices and for local government Senior Leadership Teams.
- Working with the profession, DfT should also develop business case training to increase knowledge and raise awareness amongst adjacent professions (e.g. scheme designers, planners, environmental specialists, etc.).
- DfT and local government should recognise the plurality of experience and qualification amongst business case practitioners and that while the Better Business Case qualification is one way to develop skills and capability, it is not the only way.
- The Transport Planning Society will work with DfT to identify training needs and then deliver and implement the training programmes needed.

Poor Transparency of Government Business Cases

- The commitment to publish Full Business Cases should extend to both Strategic and Outline Business Cases and the advice that is given to decision makers.
- The commitment to publish should be extended to local government.
- Building on the example Evaluation Registry, DfT should develop a Business Case Registry with the longer term goal to link the two databases.

Insufficient Emphasis on Place-Based Objectives

Action: HM Treasury will work with relevant departments, including MHCLG and the Department for Transport (DfT) as well as local and regional government, to introduce place-based business cases. These will bring together the different projects that are needed to achieve the objectives of a particular place. Place-based business cases will make sure that the government properly assesses the complementarities between different projects, such as housing and transport.

One of the more eye-catching actions of the 2025 Green Book Review is the proposed introduction of “place-based business cases” to address the issue of insufficient emphasis on place-based objectives. This finding was first identified in the 2020 Green Book Review which states that:

“Central government departments also frequently fail to work together across organisational boundaries and ring-fenced funding streams to develop, appraise and deliver truly “place based” strategy. This means that interdependencies between different interventions owned by different departments, and the benefits to a place to be expected from the interventions working together are not given proper consideration.” (para 1.15)

Since then both the Green Book and DfT’s Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) have been updated to include “place-based analysis” units that can be used for proposals with objectives specific to a particular place. The most recent Green Book Review and the proposal for Place-Based Business Cases (PBBC) is a response to concerns that Single-Project Business Cases (SPBC) do not adequately reflect regional equity objectives and that it is difficult to express the strategic contribution towards a wider outcome in this format. However, as these updates are focused on looking at the place-based impacts of a single scheme, they do not meet what the 2025 Green Book Review is looking for as a PBBC, which is about looking how multiple interventions potentially from different sectors interact synergistically in a particular location.

The introduction of PBBCs is therefore not a replacement for SPBCs or for Programme Business Cases (PBC), but rather an addition to rectify these limitations. The 2025 Review states that PBBCs:

“will function like a portfolio business case, sitting above the individual project and programme business cases for specific interventions ... they will set out objectives for a particular place, as well as a compelling theory of change for achieving these objectives. The strategic importance of a particular project should be justified by its contribution to the objectives set out in the place-based business case, rather than by comparing it to projects elsewhere in the country ... place-based business cases will provide a means to consider the strategic and economic interactions between multiple interventions in a place. They will bring together the different projects, across different policy areas, that are needed to achieve the objectives of a particular place. These projects might include transport, housing, skills, or some other intervention.”

What Does this Mean?

We welcome the introduction of place-based business cases but as ever, the devil will really be in the detail of implementation.

In writing this piece, it has emerged that there are differences amongst the TPS Policy Panel in understanding and interpretation of what is meant by “Place-Based Analysis” (PBA) and confusion

amongst practitioners, including the difference between Distributional Impact Appraisal (DIA) and PBA. Clarity is needed.

The Green Book Review's proposal is not a replacement for PBA but instead is likely to incorporate PBA features and to be successful, will need to enhance analysis to appraise cross-sector benefits, for instance interactions between transport, housing and health interventions. Techniques such as place-based disaggregation of impacts using GIS software, as set out in TAG Unit A4.3 should still be employed in SPBCs.

The Green Book Review provides snippets of information on how a PBBC will look:

- *"They will function like a portfolio level business case sitting above the individual project and programme business cases for specific interventions."*
- *"They will broadly follow the five-case model and principles set out in the Green Book."*
- *"Place-based business cases may consider the size, distribution, and dispersion of settlements, the diverse needs arising from demographics or other characteristics, and the interactions and accessibility between rural areas and urban centres. Place-based business cases may also consider the resilience of a particular place to economic shocks."*
- *"A place-based business case will underpin the strategic cases for a set of underlying project and programme business cases."*

Opportunities

The detail should emerge when the updated Green Book is published early in 2026 and over time, we would expect DfT guidance to be updated. One of the stated aims of PBBCs is that they will be cross-sectoral and cross-departmental so changes in TAG or DfT's Transport Business Case guidance should seek to reflect how the outputs from a PBBC will interface with a SPBC for a transport scheme. These should seek to maximise the opportunities to deliver consistency and savings across PBBCs and SPBCs including:

- **Strategic dimension:** the largest and most obvious efficiency would be in the development of an overarching PBBC strategic case for an area that can be easily adapted for single-project business cases. The review states PBBCs should lead to *"better-informed strategic cases"* (for SPBCs) but it is also hoped that efficiencies could be realised.
- **Economic dimension and appraisal:** As with all appraisal, proportionality is key. A PBBC should seek to undertake robust portfolio level appraisal of benefits that furthers the understanding of cross-sector benefits and *"properly assesses the complementariness between different projects"* but is also proportionate and can be delivered in a cost effective and timely manner. There are already some examples of cross-departmental appraisal such as DfT's and MHCLG's approach to dependent development, and the Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) made up of DEFRA and DfT. Such initiatives can be built on in the short-to-medium term. A longer-term goal should be greater harmonisation of appraisal techniques across different government departments and development of new techniques which also have cross-departmental applicability. Furthermore, there is the potential to undertake 'wider

economic impacts' appraisal as part of the PBBC and which could form the basis for appraisal in an SPBC.

A PBBC needs to develop a strong economic narrative that demonstrates how a programme of investment is required to “*achieve the objectives of a particular place*”. This may also include examples where several investments (potentially within different sectors) delivered together are greater than the sum of their parts. This is consistent with a ‘mission-led’ approach that requires contributions from different projects to achieve the overall outcome. The sequencing of investment to maximise positive outcomes is also likely to be crucial in a multi-scheme and multi-disciplinary PBBC. For example, to open-up a new brownfield housing site, a transport infrastructure access package may be required, but before this it may be necessary to undertake brownfield remedial works. This site may in turn overlap with other investments in the area such as flood defences. To support this type of planning and how much the transport element of proposals contributes to the overall outcome, existing modelling and appraisal will need to adapt with new indicators of success required. This use may be particularly relevant for Mayoral Combined Authorities as they increasingly move to Integrated Settlements and have greater power to allocate funding to different sectors within their area.

Programme level business cases have often aggregated benefits and costs from SPBCs to produce an ‘overall BCR’ in the past. Although this may be of use in certain cases, it does not address the identified gap in existing business cases (complementarities between projects) and potentially adds considerable cost and time to producing a PBBC.

- **Financial, commercial and management dimensions:** The level of detail in a PBBC is likely to be high level. Opportunities may exist to develop early-stage delivery plans including procurement strategies and as part of this, economies of scale may be possible, e.g. procurement of single delivery partner or other portfolio level delivery models.

Furthermore, the creation of PBBCs could present a real opportunity to adopt more vision-led strategies and build greater consensus amongst stakeholders. A greater focus on consensus building within a local area as part of PBBC development would mitigate some of the risk of single projects becoming ‘bogged down’ in development. The inter-linkages between the development of a business case and the planning system are numerous – a scheme will often require planning permission or other powers (e.g. Transport & Works Act Order) before final release of funding through the FBC with the same analyses used across both the business case and planning applications. Although business cases are not directly part of the planning process, the introduction of PBBCs needs to be considered alongside wider reforms to the planning process that are currently being undertaken. PBBCs need to be complementary and supportive, serving as an efficient way of allocating and then releasing funding in a timely fashion.

Challenges

These are some of the opportunities of creating PBBCs, but there are very considerable challenges that if PBBCs are to be useful, would need to be addressed in greater detail in the updated Green Book and then refined through piloting and/or in implementation:

- Collaboration between authorities: the Review states *“HM Treasury will work with relevant departments, including MHCLG and DfT as well as local and regional government, to introduce place-based business cases.”* This co-operation needs to extend beyond introduction to delivery and successful collaboration will be one of the determinants in the success or failure of PBBCs.
- Minimising overlap: the review states PBBCs *“will complement and support Local Growth Plans”* (LGPs) although it is not immediately obvious how they will differ. Guidance indicates that LGPs will be developed by Mayoral Strategic Authorities, while PBBCs may be on a geographically smaller scale, although this requires clarification. When it comes to PBBCs and SPBCs the goal should be complementary and the avoidance of replication.
- Other projects that make up the portfolio that is the subject of a PBBC are unlikely to be sufficiently committed to meet the TAG criteria to be included in a TAG-defined Core Scenario. This raises the question of how the complementary and synergistic impacts of a place-based portfolio of schemes are to be represented within a SPBC and ultimately, in the assessment of each individual projects Value for Money. If PBBC’s are to be helpful in supporting the assessment of an individual project’s Value for Money (VfM), it would seem greater weight would need to be placed on a “policy-on” scenario and concomitantly, less weight on the Core Scenario. Indeed, in the case of schemes that form part of a cross-sectoral place-based package, it raises the question of whether the “policy-on” scenario rather than the Core Scenario should be the starting point for VfM assessment.
- Addressing other findings of the Green Book Review in tandem: in order to achieve the goals of PBBCs, other issues identified in findings from the Green Book Review will need to be addressed. The Green Book Review issues that are likely to provide the greatest challenge to implementation of PBBCs is *“inadequate capacity and capability across the public sector”* and *“overly long and complicated guidance”*.
- There are considerable challenges adapting existing tools or developing new methodologies to answer questions such as whether projects are complementary or competitive, how much proposals contribute to local objectives and possible over estimation of benefit/under estimation of cost through optimism bias. In the longer term, methodologies to better answer these questions need to be developed.

In the interim it is important that the focus remains on filling the gaps identified in the Green Book Review through a combination of existing tools. Methods such as the DfT’s Spending Objective Analysis could be adapted more widely across departments. A PBBC should not simply look to aggregate the benefits of several SPBCs as this does not tackle the identified gap and risks adding cost and replication of other work.

- Treatment of schemes already in development: we advise that PBBCs should seek to address future projects. Retrospective crowbarring of projects that are already well developed into a PBBC could set back these projects. The greater danger might be in promoters trying to justify the inclusion of stalled schemes in a PBBC in the hope that such schemes would receive backing or fly under the radar as part of a wider programme rather than addressing the underlying reasons that caused them to stall in the first place.

Ineffectiveness at Assessing Transformational Change

Action: HM Treasury will improve the Green Book guidance on appraising transformational change. HM Treasury will commission an independent review of the Green Book discount rate to make sure that the government is taking a fair view of the long-term benefits that arise from transformational investments

Many of the transformational change comments in the Green Book Review appear to be less relevant for transport infrastructure projects and policies, than for other government investments. For example, wider economic impacts and associated benefits are already addressed in TAG. Having said that, such benefits tend to be treated as additional benefits to core transport benefits, and they are presented as more uncertain. This has the potential of not doing justice to transformational projects, where securing such benefits may be the main reason for their promotion.

A key question is how to define “transformational”? The Green Book itself (in Appendix 7) defines transformational projects as those resulting in radical permanent qualitative change in the subject being transformed, so that the subject when transformed has very different properties and behaves or operates in a different way. The Green Book Review refers to “*transformational changes that arise from major investments in a particular area*”.

These major investments are big and expensive, but this in itself does not make them transformational. We therefore suggest a need for quantification of the definition of “transformational” and that this should be evidence-based. The DfT’s own work on transformational impacts of transport is a solid starting point.¹ A scheme is considered “transformational” if there is proof of a step-change in any of the following three criteria:

- A. *“The change in the transportation system leads to a step-change in connectivity and/or effective density, which manifests itself in a significantly increased usage of the transport network.*
- B. *The scheme leads to dynamic clustering and/or land use change which can be empirically identified by a significant change in sectoral employment shares or land use shares.*
- C. *The scheme leads to increases in at least one of the following four metrics: employment, productivity per worker/firm, number of homes and/or land and property values.”²*

We set DfT with the challenge to come up with a quantification of the above. If these definitions are to be meaningful to practitioners, as identified in the Green Book Review, then DfT needs to go further, both in terms of practical and meaningful metrics, and also threshold values to be met.

That a scheme will lead to a step change needs to be established in the Strategic Case, from the outset, and guide the modelling and appraisal approach. A robust Theory of Change supported by logic mapping appears essential. An Economic Narrative (as per TAG Unit A2.1) would support this, although there is scope to develop guidance with regard to these, both in general, and also with particular regard to projects that are being promoted as “transformational”. Further development of

¹ [Transformational impacts of transport - GOV.UK](#)

² Page 14, op. cit.

the Business Case (e.g. moving from SOC to OBC) should lead to increasingly quantifiable and more robust estimates of these metrics. Monitoring and evaluation of projects claiming transformational impacts is critical if lessons are to be learned and fed back into the assessment of future schemes.

Transformational aspirations that cannot be supported by quantitative analyses should be approached with suspicion. We agree with the statement that *“assessments of transformational change should be supported by rigorous evidence and analysis”*: too many schemes have claimed to be transformational without convincingly evidencing the claim.

Other aspects of the place and project that may need consideration before a scheme can be considered transformational include its impacts on organisational or system structures, processes and perhaps most importantly, cultures. The 2023 review of transformational impacts of transport should be revisited, updated, and quantitative evidence of potential impacts of similar schemes elsewhere should be extracted, as a starting point for other studies.

The fifteen example studies in the DfT report illustrate which types of schemes may be successful in transforming a place or a system; and in the absence of local evidence, these could be used to provide confidence that a scheme that is intended to be transformational, can indeed be classed as such. This of course should not exclude other schemes, although the sponsors would need to show that at least one of the three above criteria is met. All such schemes, and particularly big and/or expensive schemes, should be subject to a rigorous modelling and appraisal process.

An additional, but important consideration is dealing with programmes where each individual project might have modest impacts that are suited to more conventional incremental modelling and appraisal already covered in TAG guidance, but when taken together there are synergies leading to potentially transformational impacts. A Local Transport Plan strategy could well fall within this category and LTP guidance should address this opportunity and accompanying analytical requirements. Alongside Place-Based Business Cases, the LTP example is a further case where there is a challenge to the specification of the conventional TAG-defined Core Scenario and the weight that should be given to alternative scenarios when coming to a view on Value for Money.

At the moment, specific guidance for the modelling or appraisal of transformational change is lacking. Practitioners lean on TAG Unit A2.1 *Wider Economic Impacts Appraisal*, but, by definition, wider economic impacts (at least at Level 2) do not equate to transformational impacts. The term wider economic impacts, and the way in which wider economic impacts are generally presented, suggests additional benefits to the transport economic impacts of a scheme, whereas a transformational scheme would aim to achieve such wider impacts first and foremost, with transport efficiency impacts being secondary. This aligns also with the Government’s mission-led Plan for Change – societal outcomes rather than transport efficiencies being the key strategic objectives of transformational schemes, and hence they should be valued as such.

Different modelling techniques will be appropriate for the assessment of transformational interventions, which explicitly quantify and where possible monetise the intended impacts as well as allow the identification of unintended consequences. Spatial Computable General Equilibrium (SCGE) modelling is one promising approach, especially for schemes that are seeking to boost economic growth. In contrast to Land Use Transport Interaction (LUTI) models, which in the main alter the location of economic activity in response to a transport intervention and only assess

productivity changes at the margin, SCGE models can consider how a transport intervention changes the nature of endogenous economic growth. Presented in TAG Unit A2.1 as a tool to be used in Supplementary Economic Modelling, we suggest that at least for schemes claiming to meet criteria C above, the case for a transformational investment should start with such an approach, rather than being considered supplementary.

Whichever of the three criteria schemes are claiming to meet, better TAG guidance needs to be developed for the modelling and appraisal of transformational policies, plans and projects. This said, transformational projects are a small sub-set of all transport schemes. And they are likely to be unique. So, instead of developing a dedicated TAG Unit, the focus could be on developing the DfT's existing guidance on Supplementary Economic Models. Guidance might rather say that the approach should be agreed with DfT in advance, while drawing from a set of analytical techniques with which DfT has some comfort. This is not to say that promoters cannot be innovative with their analytical methods, only that innovation should be to support the analysis and not be innovation for innovation's sake.

Given that by their nature, transformational projects are big and so likely to be promoted by DfT or its agencies (Network Rail, National Highways, etc.), care must be taken that the perception is not that DfT will be marking its own homework. Here, there may be a role for a registered cadre of experienced but independent peer reviewers, maintained by one of the professional institutions or NISTA.

Returning to the point about taking a fair view of the long-term benefits, in 2021 DfT consulted on the possibility of extending the appraisal period to better capture longer term costs and benefits. While not wanting to re-open the debate held at that time, it was clear from the responses that the profession was deeply sceptical of the merits of doing so. Subsequently, while the standard 60 year appraisal period was unchanged, TAG was extended to allow sensitivity testing of longer appraisal periods, something that has since been done for HS2. The 2025 Green Book Review says that, *"several stakeholders commented that the magnitude of these discount rates may unfairly undermine the appraisal of long-term transformational schemes that produce benefits well into the future"*, albeit without explaining why this is the case. Already the Social Time Preference Rate (STPR) decreases over time, which means that costs and benefits in later years are discounted less than they otherwise would be if the discount rate were constant over the appraisal period. Presumably, the proposition from these stakeholders is to reduce the discount further for later years of the appraisal which would have the effect of increasing the scale of Present Value of Benefits (PVB) and Present Value of Costs (PVC) and increasing the proportion of each that would come from later in the appraisal period.

There are good reasons to look again at the discount rate. The Ramsey Equation, which is used to define the STPR, has two components – a pure time preference for benefits now rather than in the future and a wealth effect, which is the product of the elasticity of marginal utility and the growth rate of per capita consumption. An implication of the Ramsey Equation is that lives in the future are worth less than now, which is discrimination against future generations. Frank Ramsey himself called this position "ethically indefensible". The way to avoid this ethically indefensible position is not to apply the pure time preference element of the discount rate when there are intergenerational impacts that affect life. The Green Book already allows a 1.5% discount rate to be applied when

there are health impacts so this lower discount rate could be adopted for other intergenerational impacts such as the monetisation of carbon emissions, although we note that both valuation of carbon and the method for developing these is not without question. Notwithstanding, it is not immediately apparent why the discount rate should be reviewed because of the long-term impacts of transformational projects. A lower discount rate in later years would increase both PVB and PVC and as long as the annual benefits exceed annual costs this would increase BCRs. However, it would increase the BCRs of all schemes whether they are considered transformational or not. It would also raise the question of whether BCR benchmarks would also need to be changed as the BCR is a function of the appraisal period *and* the applied discount rate. Changing one or both of these would suggest a need to look again at BCR benchmarks.

Already the DfT's Value for Money Framework allows for long-term impacts to be considered even if these are not incorporated into a BCR. We suggest that a more fruitful approach than looking at discount rates would be to develop better methods to incorporate residual values into cost benefit analysis, noting that the current approach in TAG is no more than a longer appraisal period applied in a different way and therefore is open to all the same criticisms that were made in response to the DfT's 2021 consultation.³

Continued Over-Emphasis on BCRs in Decision Making

Action: HM Treasury will update the Green Book to provide greater clarity on the role of the BCR in appraisal. It will make clear that the Green Book does not endorse the use of arbitrary 'BCR thresholds'. It will outline that a BCR of less than one does not automatically constitute poor value for money. HM Treasury does not simply rank different projects, with different objectives, by their BCRs as a means of allocating funding.

Busting Myths

The public and political debate over transport investment has raised some myths and misunderstandings about the Green Book. Many of these relate to the role of benefit cost ratios (BCRs) and how they are calculated.

In fact, the Green Book has very few technical rules about BCRs and how they should be interpreted. Most are in departmental guidance which applies the Green Book principles to particular sectors. For transport, this is the DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), which sets out how BCRs should be calculated and in its *Value for Money Framework*, which sets out how BCRs are used when assessing VfM. And in the transport sector, most myths therefore relate to TAG and other pieces of DfT guidance rather than the Green Book itself. For example, it is sometimes suggested that the approach to valuing journey time savings is skewed towards higher-waged regions. In fact, the opposite is true, as TAG deliberately recommends using national average values of time: this understates benefits in areas that are on average well-off and overstates them in places that are on average not well-off.

³ With the current approach, residual values are simply the summed present value of benefits and costs from the standard appraisal period plus one year to the end of the assumed asset life. For example, if the asset life is taken to be 100 years, then the residual value of benefits would be the sum of the present value of benefits for years 61 to 100. The approach for costs is the same.

Most fundamentally, however, the Green Book is a thinking and assessment process, not (as myth has it) a test to be passed. A strong BCR is not a guarantee of funding, nor vice versa⁴ – partly because there is far more to a properly-done Green Book appraisal than the BCR, and partly because decision-makers still have freedom to decide (Box 1).

Box 1: Pacer Replacement: an Example of How the BCR is Not the Final Arbiter

In 2015 the then government decided it wanted to replace the old and disliked ‘Pacer’ trains used widely in the north of England. They would do this by requiring bidders in the forthcoming re-franchising competitions to withdraw them in favour of new- build vehicles.

The estimated benefit cost ratio for this was 0.35, representing poor value for money. Officials were concerned about this position, and that (rather than precisely stipulating this course of action) allowing bidders to propose other approaches might offer better value for money.

Nevertheless, the Secretary of State decided that other, wider factors meant the plan should go ahead. The Pacers were seen as incompatible with the government’s vision for economic growth and prosperity in the North, and the government wished to see a long-term solution.

What Does the Green Book Review Actually Mean?

The Green Book Review summarises the BCR-related criticisms as: (1) the BCR methodology introduces a bias in favour of schemes in London and the South East, and (2) decision-makers over-emphasise the BCR. The two issues would reinforce each other.

The Treasury response on the bias issue is that there’s no conclusive evidence. But the absence of evidence means that the Treasury can’t prove there is *no* bias (or that if there is, it makes no difference to the decisions made) – hence the commitment to publish more of the government’s business cases.

On the over-emphasis issue, the Treasury sees this as an issue with public sector appraisal practice, rather than with the Green Book *per se*. And contrary to certain reports, the Chancellor has not actually changed any rules. Instead, as the Review findings set out, the Green Book update will re-emphasise what it already says, and will draw attention to what it *doesn’t* say. It doesn’t require or endorse arbitrary BCR thresholds for deciding whether or not to fund a project: a BCR below 1 doesn’t automatically mean a project is poor value for money. And the Green Book doesn’t tell the Treasury (or anyone else) to simply allocate funding to the projects with the highest BCRs.

The Review findings add that the Treasury “*encourages government departments and public bodies to review their appraisal processes to make sure that they are appropriately adopting these principles*”. This is a polite way of saying: the problem in this area isn’t the Green Book, it’s that

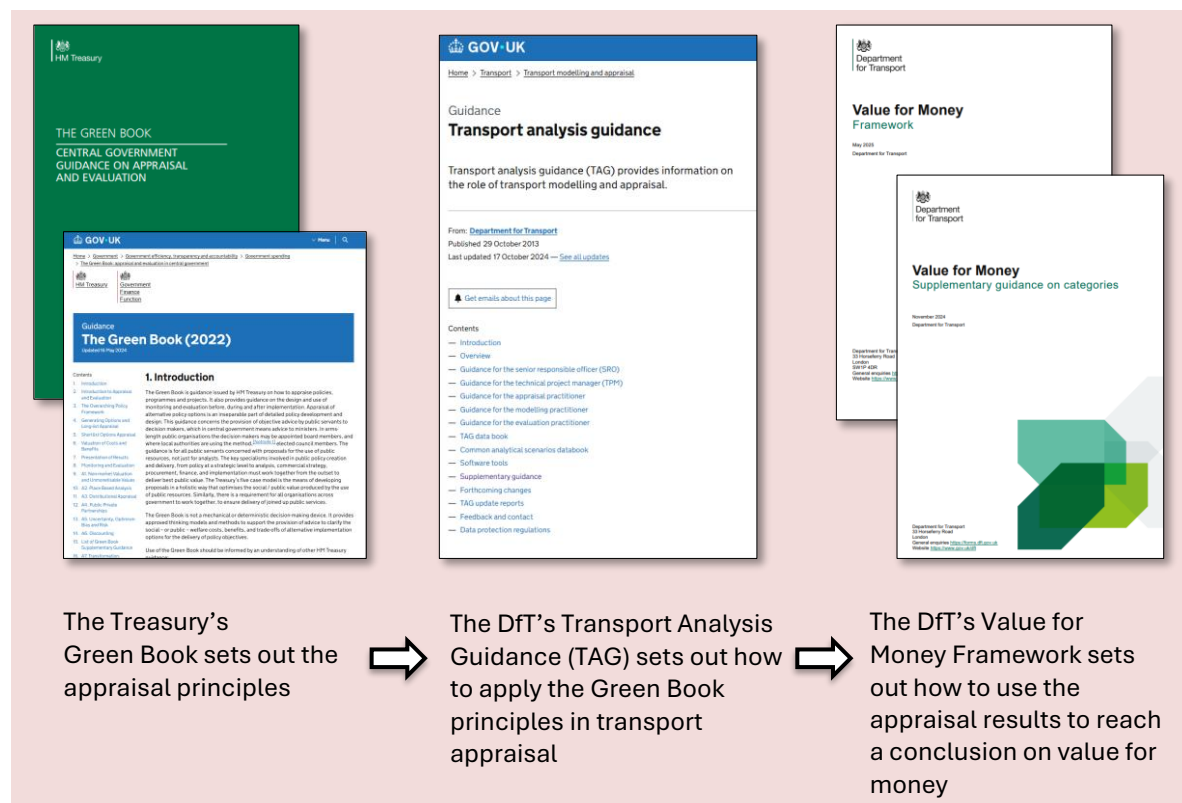
⁴ See, for example, Table 1 and Figure 3 of [The Imperial Treasury: appraisal methodology and regional economic performance in the UK](#)

spending bodies or their decision-makers don't always follow it as they should. It should be noted that the national equity value of time used in appraisal is a long standing DfT attempt to provide at least some balance in this regard.

How Appropriate and Well-Aligned Are the Green Book and DfT Guidance?

For transport projects in England, the DfT's *Value for Money Framework* is the critical guidance.⁵ This is important to understand: the Green Book sets the appraisal principles, and TAG sets out how these are applied in transport scheme appraisal, but it is the *Value for Money Framework* that shows how to use the appraisal results to reach a conclusion on Value for Money (Figure 1). So this Framework, just as much as the Green Book itself, is what gets to the heart of how BCRs are used in transport schemes.

Figure 1: For transport schemes, BCR thresholds are set out in the DfT's Value for Money Framework



The *Value for Money Framework* translates the Green Book approach to Value for-Money into a thinking process that can look at several versions of the BCR, as well as a range of other factors not considered in the BCRs. The analyst or decision-maker is asked to consider all of these before coming to a conclusion on the project's Value for Money.

The *Value for Money Framework* is not strictly binding on bodies other than DfT, but in practice other national and local bodies tend to more or less echo its approach (for example in local assurance frameworks) – in part as a model to follow, and in part because many of their schemes are seeking co-funding from, and will be scrutinised by, DfT.

⁵DfT *Value for Money Framework*, May 2025

The *Value for Money Framework* includes the use of value for money categories that are essentially an overarching summary of the outcome of the value for money assessment.⁶ The categories take account of the BCR *and* a range of other factors (Box 2).

Box 2: How the VfM Categories Work in the DfT VfM Framework⁷

The process of determining a VfM category starts with the “initial BCR”, which should be reported in the VfM statement. The benefits considered in this initial BCR are the conventional transport impacts (“Level 1” impacts).

Some projects will also have an “adjusted BCR”. This version of the BCR includes the conventional Level 1 transport impacts and some of the wider economic impacts (WEIs) and journey-time reliability impacts (“Level 2” impacts). This too should be reported in the VfM statement.

The “provisional” VfM category is based on the adjusted BCR, if there is one, or else the initial BCR. For example, an adjusted BCR between 1.5 and 2 will provisionally point to ‘medium’ value for money.

To get from ‘provisional’ to ‘final’, additional factors come into play. These include:

- Where relevant, the monetised benefits from other WEIs that involve land use change. The May 2025 edition of the VfM Framework allows for an “indicative BCR”, which is the adjusted BCR plus these extra WEIs (“Level 3” impacts).
- Any non-monetised impacts (which could be positive or negative but don’t appear in the BCR at all).
- The distributional impacts.
- The level of certainty about the results and confidence in the analysis. To the extent that it is proportionate to do so, relevant sensitivity tests and alternative scenarios should be assessed. This may include testing the scheme against some or all of the Common Analytical Scenarios and/or other promoter-defined scenarios. BCRs may be presented as ranges to reflect these results. Switching values analysis can also be used.

The provisional VfM category can then be revised to “final” in the light of these other factors. This step is for the analyst or decision-maker to determine using their judgment. For example, an initially “medium” scheme might finally be judged “low” or “high”, or stay at medium, after considering these factors. A hybrid category, such as “medium-high”, may be used to acknowledge uncertainty.

⁶ VfM Framework paras 3.1.6 and 5.1.1

⁷ This description relates to a typical project that involves a cost (in technical terms, where the Present Value Cost (PVC) is positive). If the cost is negligible, zero or negative, then different categories are used.

In theory, neither BCRs nor VfM categories represent yes/no funding thresholds. But sometimes they are (or have been) used or seen in this way.⁸

In the Green Book Review, the Treasury is not wholly deprecating the use of BCR thresholds or categories: rather, it is deprecating their use as the *sole* means of determining value for money or deciding on funding. We agree with the Treasury: BCRs should not be the sole means of determining value for money or deciding on funding.

The DfT's *Value for Money Framework* is consistent with the intent of the Green Book and the Green Book Review. It follows the Green Book approach in that the monetised benefits and the BCR are an important part of the assessment but should not be the whole story. There is explicitly room to consider all the other relevant factors.

One danger is if the *Value for Money Framework* stops being a framework and becomes overly prescriptive, or is treated in that way by analysts and decision makers. Just as BCRs should not be the final word in a "computer says no" process, single-word VfM conclusions should not become that either. They are (even more than a BCR) a matter of judgment rather than an objective test to be passed. And we need to become increasingly comfortable with accepting inevitable uncertainty that is inherent in every funding decision: exploring the grey areas and making decisions on balance rather than the (misplaced) certainty that a BCR can appear to give.

The alternative danger is going too far in the narrative direction: giving *too little* weight to the numeric cost-benefit analysis. Despite its limitations, it remains a well-developed and well-understood way of bringing rational, evidenced information into decision-making. If a proposal has a BCR lower than a promoter may have wished for, there should be no automatic assumption that it is down to limitations of the analysis or that other factors will make up for it. Nor is alignment with the original objectives an automatic trump card. The project might simply not be worth doing.

There are other dangers of going too far down the narrative approach. Promoters may pay less attention to the actual cost of their schemes, especially when the principal source of funding is coming from elsewhere, such as government or a combined authority's devolved settlement. While there is always the chance that an over-focus on cost can lead to solutions that do not deliver non-monetised benefits, one advantage of a focus on BCR is that it leads promoters to consider carefully all elements of expenditure across the appraisal life of a project. A further danger relates to selection of the preferred option: an overly narrative approach could lead promoters to gloss over some inconvenient truths of the VfM of the scheme that they would like to bring forward when compared with alternative investments.

Does Transport Guidance Need Any Further Changes to Fully Reflect the Green Book?

In one sense the BCR is a victim of its own success. It has a remarkable ability to draw together disparate impacts and issues on an 'apples to apples' basis of comparison. As techniques and

⁸ For example, the [2012-2018 DfT guidance](#) on devolved funding to local transport bodies for local major transport schemes included a minimum requirement that the local bodies must only approve schemes with at least "high" value for money, as assessed using the DfT method, or set out the limited and exceptional circumstances under which schemes in lower categories would be considered. A further example is the [TfL Business Case Development Manual](#) which comments that "Authorising bodies will normally expect the benefit to cost ratio to be greater than one and usually greater than the benchmark for good value for money of 1.5:1."

research develop over time and become better-established, more and more elements – such as wider economic impacts – are being brought within it, and with increasing sophistication. This should continue. But it also means more and more is pressed into a single number with the concomitant danger that less-and-less is explained to decision makers. The need to explore and understand all the qualitative and qualitative dimensions of the impacts does not go away, but increases. Similarly, the uncertainties in any forecasting will never go away, so thinking of BCRs in terms of ranges rather than (overly precise) point figures is valuable, and the Common Analytical Scenarios can be helpful in that respect. And of course, they need to be balanced with all the other factors that need to go into a decision. This is nowadays recognised and should become increasingly embedded in DfT guidance and devolved Assurance Frameworks. For example, the [TAG Uncertainty Toolkit](#) has valuable, practical guidance on specifying appraisal work and on reporting uncertainties to decision-makers; this should become a mainstream part of the guidance for the relevant stage of an appraisal process.

But the DfT approach to appraisal has a broader weakness. Perhaps because of its roots in cost benefit appraisal rather than in the Green Book, the process is not geared around showing how a proposal delivers the decision maker's objectives (whether project-specific or generic) in a value-for-money way. This is not simply the issue that a BCR does not in itself fully show value-for-money (which, as described above, the current process seeks to tackle). It is that the process is sometimes divorced from the objectives. For example, the Appraisal Summary Table has lost its originally deliberate alignment with government objectives.⁹

Recent changes to TAG have recognised this, with the introduction of Spending Objective Analysis and the Spending Objective Analysis Statement (SOAS) which seek to tie the appraisal evidence back to the proposal's objectives. This is a valuable and welcome development, but has the risk of being treated in practice as a bolt-on at the end of the process. We would welcome a further look at what more could be done to embed performance against objectives into the scheme development process, particularly at the early stages when options are still in play. We recommend that DfT work with practitioners to look at opportunities for doing this. The Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) uses Transport Planning Objectives (project-specific objectives) and STAG Criteria (a broader, nationally consistent framework for ensuring all impacts are considered) in parallel with each other throughout the process. This type of approach could be considered for use in England too.

What Should Practitioners Do?

Practitioners should continue to take a rounded approach, recognising the cold numbers of the BCRs, the distribution of gains and losses and the uncertainties within them, and the other considerations beyond them. All these aspects are important, valuable and ultimately helpful for decision-makers (Box 3). They all need to be assessed and set out in appraisals, with a level of effort proportionate to the scale of the proposal and the impacts, and summed-up in a thoughtful value for money statement.

⁹ The appraisal summary table (AST) started in the era of the New Approach to Transport Appraisal (NATA), as an explicit assessment of a proposal's impacts against the then government's five overall objectives for transport. See the [Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies](#) (GOMMMS). Since then, although it remains a well-rounded check list of how a proposal performs on a range of impacts, the linkage with objectives has been lost.

Practitioners should also take time to understand, and if appropriate challenge, the cost figures that are supplied to them. The cost side is as important to the BCR as the benefit side, and deserves appropriate rigour. Some projects will be in well-understood areas and/or have benefited from specialist professional cost estimation; others perhaps less so. Business case authors need to understand the level of certainty and robustness; and whether there are exclusions from the figures presented (and if so, what difference it might make when these are added-in). There are up-side opportunities too. Are there discretionary elements in the scope or design that don't provide benefits (monetised or otherwise) commensurate with their cost? Or aspects where targeted extra investment could deliver considerable extra benefits? Bringing a business case point of view to a project's scope and design decisions can help to drive value and improve the case that can be made.

More generally, we should be reminding decision-makers of the need to take a properly-balanced view as between the BCRs and other factors. But we should also respect the fact that where different factors point in different directions, the weight they give to each one is ultimately a matter for their judgment.

Box 3: Drawing-out the Issues from Within the BCR – a Case Study

A city-region was preparing a bid to DfT for money from a competitive transport funding stream. The funding was aimed at sustainable transport investments to improve productivity, access to jobs and increased use of sustainable transport modes.

The bid was for a multi-modal package, including extensive bus priority measures on several corridors that involved reallocating road capacity from general traffic to buses.

Initial analysis found the headline BCR to be disappointing: although the package was still potentially fundable, the BCR wasn't as strong as the project team had anticipated.

Digging into the detail, however, there were very distinct impacts to be drawn-out. There were strong benefits to bus users, who would see greatly reduced journey times on corridors connecting a low-income area with education and job opportunities. This would strongly advance the fund's objectives.

The main disbenefits were to general traffic on these corridors. These users would see relatively small increases in journey time (for example, a minute or less) – but because this applied to a very large number of people, it added up to a considerable negative value, nearly as much as the positive benefits to the bus users.

Having taken advice from DfT, the project team made sure that this was clearly communicated to the decision-makers as part of the bid. The positive benefits for the bus users would be highly consequential and in line with the scheme's objectives. The disbenefits would be diffuse and barely noticeable in reality by the users affected, and would not conflict with the scheme's objectives.

Although the cost-benefit analysis was required to present the numbers (and the disappointing BCR) in the conventional way, the narrative and value-for-money assessment highlighted this distribution and emphasised how the package would deliver on the fund's objectives.

Overly Long and Complicated Guidance

Action: HM Treasury will radically simplify and shorten the Green Book and the accompanying business case guides, publishing an updated Green Book at the start of 2026. HM Treasury will make clear the level of detail that is proportionate for business cases of different levels of cost and complexity and will publish examples of core appraisal techniques.

Busting Myths

As set out previously, the Green Book is the government's guidance on how to appraise policies, programmes and projects. It applies to all government departments and their agencies, as well as the devolved governments, and combined and local authorities. It is part of a wider suite of Treasury guidance, including guidance on developing business cases for strategic portfolios, programmes and projects, on evaluation (the Magenta Book) and on the standards for modelling and its assurance (the Aqua Book).

As the Green Book notes, supplementary guidance produced by departments deals with the application of the Green Book in particular circumstances. The Department for Transport's *Transport Business Case Guidance*, *Transport Analysis Guidance* (TAG) and *Value for Money Framework* sets out how the Green Book is applied in the transport sector. Day-to-day most transport professionals do not refer to the Green Book. This is simply because for most schemes they do not need to. Rather, the profession refers to the DfT's suite of guidance. Implicitly, the profession assumes that TAG and other DfT guidance reflects the Green Book. While welcome, radically simplifying and shortening the Green Book and the accompanying business case guides is unlikely to have much impact on the day-to-day work of transport professionals: only simplifying and shortening DfT's suite of guidance would have such an impact.

The Green Book Review – An Opportunity to Define Proportionality

While the Green Book Review says that the Treasury will radically simplify and shorten the Green Book, it does not say that the principles that underpin the Green Book will change. But as noted, for most transport practitioners it is not what the Green Book says that is important, rather it is how well these principles are expressed in TAG and wider DfT guidance that counts.

Some of these principles are well reflected in the DfT's guidance. For instance, the Green Book says that policies, programmes and projects should be applied from a social welfare perspective. DfT's TAG suite of guidance tells the profession in great detail how to do this through the guidance it gives on modelling and then appraisal. But the Green Book also says that "*this guidance should be applied proportionately*" (para 1.6). Unfortunately, both the Green Book and the DfT's suite of guidance are largely silent about what this means in practice. The proportionality principle is poorly applied with many business cases containing unnecessary analysis throughout the strategic and economic dimensions.

Practical guidance is urgently needed from DfT on the application of the proportionality principle. Many business cases are over-long and contain nugatory analysis. This costs the public sector money it does not need to spend and delays project implementation. Furthermore, such business cases can also be taken to be precedents for future business cases and over-analysis becomes self-perpetuating.

The proportionality principle should be closely related to relevance, that is the focus of modelling and appraisal should be on those positive and negative impacts that are most material to making a decision. Too often it seems that an Appraisal Specification Report (ASR) starts with the modelling and appraisal tools available, rather than thinking about what impacts will the scheme create and what appraisal and tools are therefore appropriate. This could mean not using all the tools available, or alternatively a need to fill an analytical hole. Or alternatively, the ASR starts with one from a similar scheme and simply transplants approaches whether or not they were important in the scheme's assessment.

As part of more general guidance on proportionality, the DfT should develop guidance for light touch business cases that could be either applied to different categories of scheme (e.g. active travel), or scheme cost (with a caveat that some low cost but high impact schemes may require more detailed business cases).

While the Green Book Review promises greater clarity on what the application of the proportionality principle means in practice, as noted above, key for the transport profession is not what a new Green Book says about proportionality, but how the DfT then translates this into its own guidance. What needs to be avoided is an elongated period between a new Green Book and the DfT incorporating any new Treasury guidance into its own suite of guidance documents. This is because any gap will be filled by multiple interpretations from those on the front line, many of which will not stand the test of time.

How Should DfT Guidance and Assurance Frameworks Change, to Properly Reflect the Intent of the Green Book

In addition to addressing what is meant by the proportionality principle, DfT should take the opportunity afforded by a new Green Book to look again at the structure and content of its own suite of guidance. We would urge DfT to focus its efforts on:

- Developing its guidance on option development and assessment into a single and concise guide which would replace relevant parts of the *Transport Appraisal Process*. At present, guidance on option development is diffuse and conflicting, and poorly links to the business case stages. This should take a practical rather than a theoretical approach, ideally with illustrative worked examples. It could also be a good opportunity to re-emphasise that this is a 'thinking process' more than a box-ticking exercise: for example, that objectives need to be the real underlying objectives (rather than being built around the intended solution), and that a sufficiently wide range of approaches should be considered (not just a narrow range of technical options around a pre-determined approach).
- In many respects both the Green Book and the DfT's guidance takes a naïve view on option development. Path dependency is feature of many transport business cases, and it should be recognised that there are always "policy entrepreneurs" advocating for a particular mode, scheme or policy. It would be better for option development guidance to recognise the real world, rather than take an artificial view that analysts start with a blank sheet of paper. In addition, greater weight should be placed on schemes that flow down from a Local Transport Plan, or in the future, a Place-Based Business Case rather than the business case having to "re-prove" the case for change and why options can meet this case.

- Developing a simple guide to using the Options Framework Filter (OFF) on a transport project. The OFF is the Green Book’s mandated method for longlisting and shortlisting, and is incorporated by reference in DfT’s transport business case guidance. But it has barely entered transport planning practice. The OFF is major change of approach, and practical guidance on applying the OFF process to transport schemes is needed if it is to be adopted (box 4).
- Developing a successor to, or withdrawing, the Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST). Although a welcome innovation at the time of launch, in practice it is complex to use and has been mis-applied as a shortlisting tool, with considerable limitations for this purpose (box 5).
- A simple guide to building a good strategic case and as part of that, developing theories of change and representing these through logic mapping. While the DfT’s May 2025 *Local Authority Major Schemes Benefits Management and Evaluation Framework* provides some helpful guidance on theory of change/logic mapping, there is more that can be done (as well as this document being an odd place to talk about work that should be done at early stages of the development of a Strategic Outline Case).
- How to develop the “golden thread” that needs to flow through the Strategic Dimension into the Economic Dimension and ultimately into the Value for Money statement.

Box 4: The Options Framework-Filter

The Green Book now requires ^[1] use of the Options Framework-Filter (OFF) for constructing a longlist of viable options and selecting from these a shortlist to go forward to more detailed appraisal. The OFF method is very different from the way transport projects normally generate a long-list and then use a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) – a scoring matrix of options and assessment criteria – for shortlisting.

Indeed, the Green Book deprecates use of MCA, seeing it as lacking transparency and objectivity. The Green Book does, however, allow complex technical trade-offs in shortlisting within the OFF process to be assisted by the use of expertly facilitated Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) making use of swing weighting. The Green Book sees this as being more objective than MCA.

The DfT’s transport business case guidance now expects scheme promoters to use the OFF. However, this is rarely if ever fulfilled: transport projects are generally doing what they always have done.

The current approach certainly has its weaknesses. The range of options identified can be too narrow if the exercise is not approached with openness, thought and creativity. MCA is deceptively simple: doing it well is remarkably hard. It can be time-consuming and subjective. So, there are good reasons to look beyond current practice.

However, the OFF is currently not easy to adopt in transport schemes. To start with, there are differences in terminology: The Green Book’s ‘business as usual’ is what we call the do-minimum. What they call the ‘do-minimum’ is what we would call the minimum viable product. Once past that hurdle, the sequence of option-generation steps (covering permutations of scope, service

solution, delivery model, phasing and funding source) can seem alien to transport planners for whom the last three steps are often just downstream ways of delivering the chosen option. And the Green Book's worked example, in which a particular modal approach is a 'given' starting point, should not unwittingly encourage scheme promoters to think narrowly when a much wider range of approaches needs to be considered.

If DfT is serious about aligning with the Green Book by adopting the OFF, it should develop a simple guide to using it on a transport project, including some relevant worked examples. This should include showing how to tackle the issue that a wide range of approaches (not simply a wide range of scopes and technical solutions) may be available to solve a problem.

[1] "Use of the options framework-filter is required best practice for consideration of a longlist of possible options." – Green Book 2024, section 4.4.

Box 5: The Early Assessment and Sifting Tool

The DfT's Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) is a way of presenting and summarising evidence on options. It was intended to support early sifting-out of unpromising options. Its major advantages are that it is a ready-made format covering all the key areas of assessment, and that it can cope with widely differing options on an equal footing. It also prompts users to consider how firm the evidence is.

However, in practice it has been used as a shortlisting tool, which was not the intention, and it has considerable limitations for this purpose. The standard format and breadth of areas mean a lot of 'box-completion', with potential to obscure the real issues, and it requires adaptation if there is a need to focus on a richer understanding of particular areas. Most fundamentally, there is just a single criterion for the impact on identified problems and objectives, and any trade-offs between different problems/objectives can only come through in the textual commentary.

We recommend replacing EAST with a more issues-oriented approach, perhaps alongside a more flexible tool, that retains the prompting to think widely about both potential impacts and delivery practicalities while raising the focus on objectives and helping decision-makers to focus on sifting runners from non-runners. It may need to be aligned to the OFF process.

Inadequate Capacity and Capability Across the Public Sector

HM Treasury and the Welsh Government will reform the Better Business Cases training programme. The NWF is expanding its role to provide early-stage development support to local and regional government. HM Treasury will support MHCLG and other departments to establish more secondments between central and regional government.

The commitment to increasing capacity and capability across the public sector is welcomed. This is particularly important with the move to further devolution of decision making to Mayoral Strategic Authorities, a natural consequence of which will be a greater number of public servants being involved in the specification, development and assessment of business cases than hitherto.

The Better Business Case training and qualification has been valuable in increasing capacity and capability, but we would not want it to become a “gateway” qualification which has to be attained in order to be involved in the specification, development and assessment of transport business cases. There are many highly experienced business case practitioners in the public and private sectors who have a diversity of training and qualifications including higher level degrees, on-the-job training through Continuing Professional Development, as well as the practical experience of taking implemented schemes through the business case and powers application process. In terms of qualifications and experience, the transport planning profession has always been a broad church.

The Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification covers modelling, forecasting and appraisal, set in the context of skills such as public engagement and understanding complex data. There is an intermediate qualification: Incorporated Transport Planner (IncTP) which covers similar knowledge requirements. Better Business Cases training is seen as part of the evidence which can demonstrate the competence needed. We propose both of these qualifications are recognised by DfT as meeting their requirements for Business Case preparation.

This said, as part of the Better Business Cases training programme reform, it would appear sensible to use it to drive adoption into practice of the reforms proposed by the Green Book Review, for instance change the culture around focus on BCR. Furthermore, we recommend that training is developed for Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) and other members of local government Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) to enable them to more effectively undertake the oversight role that is essential for the timely development of compelling, defensible and robust business cases.

A further area where “light touch” training would be worthwhile is with those disciplines that are adjacent to the business case, and modelling and appraisal process, for example designers, so they have a better appreciation of what is needed at each stage of the business case process and how their work will be used.

There are two important points about such an approach:

- First is that the completion of targeted light touch training is no substitute for the development of the wide-ranging skill set that is required for transport planners. The whole point of IncTP and TPP is to combine breadth and depth. The best business cases should be backed up with the best analysis and deepest understanding of that analysis and the issues involved.
- Second and in contrast to this is the lack of skills resources, especially in the public sector. Government must understand the concept of the intelligent client – often a local authority. Building skills capital in the new authorities should be a cross cutting exercise between DfT, which can support qualifications through recognition, professional bodies such as TPS and agencies such as Skills England.

As has been set out several times in this paper, for the transport profession it is the DfT’s suite of guidance that counts and not the Green Book itself. The DfT will need to be proactive in driving forward the development of capacity and capability. Professional development is at the core of the Transport Planning Society’s *raison d’être*. As such, we would welcome the opportunity to work with DfT to identify training needs and then develop and implement training programmes to meet the changing needs.

Poor Transparency of Government Business Cases

The government will publish business cases for major projects and programmes. This will ensure transparency of decision making, including the geographical distribution of projects, and help to support local and regional government by demonstrating best practice.

The commitment to publish business cases for major projects and programmes is strongly welcomed. As well as increasing transparency of decision making, successful business cases are a valuable resource for the profession to learn lessons. However, greater clarity is needed on what is meant by major projects and programmes. If in the transport sector this definition is limited to (say) schemes that have been subject to a Development Consent Order (DCO) or Transport & Works Act Order (TWAo), this falls short of full transparency. (And in any event, business cases for such schemes are usually publicly available through the inquiry process, although they can quickly cease to be accessible once an inquiry concludes.)

In July, Government launched its Evaluation Registry. This creates a model for DfT making it published business cases available in one easily accessible place. In time, published business cases could be linked with the published evaluation.

The Green Book Review action is that it is Full Business Cases that are published. While a welcome start this should not be the end point:

- Publication of Strategic Outline Cases and Outline Business Cases would make transparent the evolution of a scheme from the start of the problem identification and option development stage through to the final delivered schemes.
- Publication of the DfT's assessment of each business case stage and the advice given to decision makers would further increase transparency and support lesson learning for future business cases.

In due course, the requirement to publish should be extended to Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

About the Transport Planning Society

The Transport Planning Society (TPS) is the only professional body focusing entirely on transport planning in the UK. The aim of the Society is to raise the profile of transport planning and chart a course for the profession.

About the Transport Planning Society Policy Panel

The TPS Policy Panel was formed in November 2024 to:

- Ensure TPS is influential and proactive in seeking improvements in policy and practice, and in setting the transport agenda at a national, regional and local level.
- Be proactive in the creation of an open, diverse and inclusive transport planning community.
- Provide the widest possible forum to engage on relevant and topical transport planning issues.

- Improve the public understanding and the image of transport planning and transport planners, and promoting transport planning as a profession.

The panel has five sub-groups, and this piece has been co-authored by four members of the Governance, Appraisal and Business Case Modelling Group:

- Neil Chadwick, Director, Steer
- Joe Charlesworth, Technical Director - Transport Planning & Advisory, Sweco
- Graham James, Technical Director, Galle Saliman
- Tom van Vuren, Head of Digital Transport at Amey and Director at Van Vuren Analytics Ltd