

Headline report: Key challenges in developing a Strategic Transport Plan for the North

Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) has been commissioned by Transport for the North (TfN) to facilitate NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and voluntary sector groups with an interest in the environment and sustainable transport, in contributing to the emerging Strategic Transport Plan.

As the first stage of this work, CBT consulted a wide range of stakeholders through workshops, interviews and an online survey, which identified and explored priority environmental and social themes. The feedback on these themes is summarised in this headlines report.

The full report explores these issues in more depth and is accompanied by a methodology report with details of the responses received: these will be published alongside all the reports contributing to the Strategic Transport Plan later in 2017.

The views reported are solely those of the participants in the engagement process, and do not necessarily reflect CBT's policy positions.

Key issues

Carbon reduction and high environmental standards should be essential goals for TfN's strategies and its programmes. Participants cited evidence that reducing carbon emissions and promoting high environmental standards brings economic as well as environmental benefits. Good quality of life is part of the North's attractions to businesses, investors and people and should be retained and enhanced, not traded off. "Good growth" is something that TfN might explore.

Current transport appraisal gives insufficient weight to reducing carbon and air pollution and protecting and enhancing the quality of life, and insufficient weight to access to jobs and services, and that TfN needs to reflect this in evaluating its strategies and proposals.

TfN should seek to help improve transport across the North, including local transport. TfN could help local authorities and others across the North by creating an evidence base and giving access to research and intelligence, highlighting and sharing good practice, such looking at carbon and public health outcomes, or mapping public transport accessibility to help guide development away from car-dependent locations..

Participants were clear that **unless TfN is seen to help local as well as longer distance transport it will be seen as irrelevant to many communities in the North.** The smart ticketing programme was seen as an example of a practical way that TfN could help communities across the North, and was widely supported by participants.

Priority themes

Access to jobs and services: there is enthusiastic support for improving transport to support economic activity and access to services by connecting communities to the public transport network and integrating different transit systems. **Smart ticketing and travel planning information are seen as big benefits that TfN's work can deliver to an increasingly flexible and dispersed workforce.** There is a strong view that these benefits should be available to every community across the North, not only those currently well served by public transport.

Carbon reduction: NGOs are acutely aware of the challenge of meeting carbon reduction targets. Without embracing carbon reduction as a goal of the STP instead of a constraint upon it, there will be a conflict in expanding travel while reducing carbon emissions. There are **opportunities for TfN to be a leader in moving to a low carbon future, through programmes of rail electrification and modal shift** (such as Park & Ride infrastructure) away from motor vehicle use, bringing economic as well as environmental benefits.

Air pollution: participants are concerned about the illegal levels of air pollution in many communities across the TfN area, and aware of the emerging legal judgements requiring Government action. Binding targets will not be met without leadership from transport bodies. **TfN has a great opportunity to show such leadership by making improving air quality a goal not a constraint in its investment programme**, prioritising sustainable modes, promoting clean infrastructure and mitigating existing pollution sources.

Landscape and heritage: the beauty of the natural and built environment are seen as part of what makes the North special, and as an active economic asset stimulating tourism, food production, as well as well as a valuable setting. **Any new infrastructure is a potential threat so a strategic approach is welcomed** to get the right locations and design. Respondents saw opportunities beyond statutory minimums for the STP to value and safeguard these assets. They urged making the most of the existing infrastructure first, and if new provision is required, prioritising sustainable low impact options.

Biodiversity and habitats: respondents were well aware of the loss of biodiversity recorded in the UK. **Transport strategy brings great potential risk of erosion and fragmentation of habitats, yet also potential opportunities to plan the network to minimise impacts by joining up policy.** TfN could work with specialist NGOs to develop a scorecard to evaluate development sites in terms of their importance for biodiversity. TfN could lead in retrofitting existing transport infrastructure to reduce its adverse environmental impact.

Flood protection: Respondents recognised the importance of this issue for the North given extreme weather events of recent years. **TfN has a role in sharing best practice in location, design and management** of infrastructure to address flood risk. Stopping the erosion of protective woodland, respecting flood plains, and mainstreaming SUDS and similar technical solutions into all schemes, were seen as critical.

Integration with local services. We were repeatedly reminded that all journeys are local at some stage and many vital journeys are wholly local. **TfN can share best practice and provide a quality framework**, encouraging a levelling up of the local service provision on which many journeys depend.

Joining up transport planning with spatial planning. Virtually all responses touched on this issue. **Having a clear view on spatial planning priorities, and where appropriate influencing these to locate development near transport hubs**, was seen as critical to TfN's Strategic Transport Plan being effective in reality.

Equality and accessibility. This principle was raised on multiple levels: access to participation in the development of the STP; access to specific modes, locations or services; **TfN's role in addressing 'transport poverty' and improving accessibility and affordability of transport services across the region.**

December 2016