

# **Transport Decarbonisation: Setting the Challenge**

## **Summary and Engagement Guide**

### **Purpose of this guide**

This guide is designed to summarise key points within the UK Government's Transport Decarbonisation paper ('the Paper'), and help enable individuals and groups to highlight the role active travel must play in the transport de-carbonisation process.

### **What is the Transport Decarbonisation paper?**

The Department for Transport (DfT) published the Paper, entitled [Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge](#) on 26<sup>th</sup> March. This was said to be the first step towards publishing a Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) in Autumn 2020.

### **How can the public engage in this process?**

Prior to publication of the TDP, the DfT has said that it will hold a series of events, workshops and opportunities to ensure that stakeholders and the public have a chance to have their say on how the Government tackles and reduces transport emissions. Specifically, the Paper states that the Government wants "to hear from individuals, businesses, trade associations, local authorities, scientists, researchers, innovators, interest groups and environmental groups as we develop the first comprehensive action plan for decarbonising transport".

The Paper also states that the Government intends to host a series of workshops to work with stakeholders and representative groups and will launch a public feedback opportunity (consultation) for transport users and stakeholders to feed in their views on decarbonising transport.

This guide will be updated once further information is published regarding the stakeholder workshops, and once the consultation commences; however, the Paper does invite people and groups to register for regular updates on the progress of the TDP and register their interest for the workshops by emailing [TDP@dft.gov.uk](mailto:TDP@dft.gov.uk).

### **Is this a UK-wide or England-only plan?**

The Climate Act 2008 commits the UK Government to action to reduce carbon emissions across the UK, and the commitment to reaching net zero by 2050 is UK-wide. However, many aspects of transport policy, including budgets and decision-making for roads investment, cycling and walking, are devolved, and therefore outside the control of the DfT. It seems that the DfT intends to publish a UK-wide TDP, acknowledging that the power to implement parts of that plan will rest with devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Consequently, you can engage in this process and respond to the consultation wherever you live in the United Kingdom, but the DfT's powers to directly determine active travel policy and funding will be limited to England.

## Is there anything new or good in the Paper?

Yes. The Ministerial Foreword by the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, contains some bold statements of intent, particularly around the need to use our cars less. While it is action, not words, that matters, we should note and hold the Government to account on the following statements:

- Climate change is the most pressing environmental challenge of our time. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that we need to take action and doing so is a clear priority for the Government.
- Transport has a huge role to play in the economy reaching net zero. The scale of the challenge demands a step change in both the breadth and scale of ambition.
- The associated benefits of bold and ambitious action to tackle transport emissions are also significant. We can improve people's health, create better places to live and travel in, and drive clean economic growth.
- Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network.
- The Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set out how we intend to transform the movement of people, goods and services to reach net zero.

## What are the strategic priorities for the Transport Decarbonisation Plan?

The Paper sets out six strategic priorities for the TDP, so if you're responding to the consultation or engaging with the workshops it may help to focus on the priorities that are particularly relevant to active travel, namely:

- **Accelerating modal shift to public and active transport.**

Under this priority there are references to:

1. Helping to make public transport and active travel the natural first choice for daily activities.
2. Supporting fewer car trips through a coherent, convenient and cost-effective public network; and exploring how we might use cars differently in future.
3. Encouraging cycling and walking for short journeys.
4. Exploring how best to support the behaviour change required.

- **Decarbonising how we get our goods.**

This includes references to transforming 'last-mile' deliveries and developing an integrated, clean and sustainable delivery system.

- **Place-based solutions.**

Under this priority there are references to:

1. Considering where, how and why emissions occur in specific locations.
2. Addressing emissions at a local level through local management of transport solutions.
3. Targeting support for local areas, considering regional diversity and different solutions.

While these priorities are clearly stated, there is little in the Paper to indicate how they are to be achieved. The priorities are set, but mechanisms are unclear, with reference to encouraging cycling

and walking for short journeys rather than enabling this through infrastructure and policy decisions which create an environment where cycling and walking are natural choices.

### **Why is the Government doing this now?**

Chapter 1 of the Paper includes some background information on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and transport.

Put simply, the Government has committed to achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2050 and has various legal commitments along the way. It must tackle transport emissions to achieve these because transport is now the largest contributor to domestic GHG emissions, producing 28% of UK emissions in 2018. Transport emissions are 4% higher than in 2013 and are only 3% lower than in 1990.

Although it is not clear from the Paper whether there is an acceptance of the scale of the action needed, and the urgency, the Paper does acknowledge that addressing climate change will deliver a range of co-benefits including improved public health and reduced air pollution, with the statement that by addressing climate change “we will improve the places in which we live and work, our health and wellbeing and outcomes for future generations, as well as reducing inequality and promoting a fairer society”.

The reference to health and wellbeing for future generations is perhaps one to hold the Government to account on. In Wales, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Accordingly, in Wales, climate change and the reduction of transport emissions has to be considered with the welfare of future generations in mind, with the reduction of inequality a parallel goal. Within the DfT’s 80-page Paper, inequality is only mentioned twice.

Transport inequality, and the need for a sustainable development approach to decarbonisation of transport, is therefore something that requires greater focus, notwithstanding the welcome acknowledgement of co-benefits.

### **What does the Paper say about cycling and walking?**

Chapter 2 states that cycling and walking are the ultimate forms of zero-GHG-emission transport. There is then reference to the current levels of investment in active travel, which are [inadequate](#) and won’t enable the Government to reach its own cycling targets.

The two significant statements in this section, the first of which needs to be repeatedly quoted back to Government, are that:

- We will create a long-term programme and budget that dramatically increases investment in cycling and walking.
- Final decisions on future funding for cycling and walking over this Parliament (to 2025) will be made as part of the Spending Review, expected later this year.

The Government can't achieve its targets to reduce GHG emissions without tacking and reducing transport emissions. It says we need to use our cars less. That will only happen if other options appear attractive and viable, which means that radically increasing investment in active travel must be central to the TDP.

### **What's missing from the Plan?**

It's not possible in a four-page guide to highlight every detail of an 80-page plan, and all the gaps in it. There is however a major question about whether the Government appreciates the scale of the action needed, and the implications. An example is the Government's [£27.4 billion roads budget for England](#), announced in the March budget, two weeks before the publication of this Plan which accepts that we need to use our cars less and that modal shift is needed.

A key point for campaigners in responding to the consultation should be the inconsistency between planned roads expenditure and the TDP, particularly given the acceptance that a dramatic increase in active travel investment is needed.

### **What points can I make when responding to the consultation?**

As and when the consultation is published, we will provide further advice and guidance tailored to the consultation questions. This guide is intended to summarise the Plan, explain the opportunities to get involved and have your say, and highlight some key themes you may wish to raise if you respond. It is by no means exhaustive, but points which you may wish to make might relate to:

- The need for a dramatic increase in active travel investment: how much will that be and when will it be available?
- The inconsistency between the TDP and the roads investment budget: how does the Government plan to get us to use our cars less while building new roads?
- The need to enable people to make different travel choices and choose active travel: it's not enough to encourage, you need to enable, by building infrastructure and places that enable active travel.
- The need for a sustainable development approach, so public health, air pollution and inequality issues aren't dealt with as simply additional co-benefits of reducing transport GHG emissions but are central to the overall plan.

We will provide further guidance on all of the above, and on the consultation process generally, once that consultation is published. Any groups considering registering their interest to participate in the stakeholder workshops can however contact Cycling UK via email at [campaigns@cyclenguk.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@cyclenguk.org.uk) for further advice and assistance.

*Published 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020*