

The role of localism in ensuring a fair and just transition to net zero and driving decarbonisation

Webinar 3

Monday 13 September

Rising to the Challenge: What will it take to decarbonise transport?

webinar series brought to you by



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In the second of the webinar series entitled 'Rising to the Challenge: What will it take to decarbonise transport?', members of the Greener Transport Council heard from:

- **Professor Stephen Glaister, Emeritus Professor of Transport and Infrastructure, Imperial College London and LSE**
- **Claire Haigh, Chief Executive, Greener Transport Solutions**
- **Professor Phil Goodwin, Senior Fellow, Foundation for Integrated Transport**
- **Luke Ravenscroft, Lead Director on energy, environment and sustainability, Behavioural Insights Team**
- **Greg Archer, UK Director, Transport & Environment**
- **Suzanne Moir, Partner, Infrastructure, Projects and Energy, Addleshaw Goddard**
- **Professor Jillian Anable, Professor of Transport and Energy, University of Leeds ITS**
- **Andy Eastlake, Chief Executive, Zemo Partnership**
- **Anna Rothnie, Principal Transport Planner, Mott MacDonald**
- **Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Transport Focus**
- **Paul Campion, Chief Executive, TRL**
- **Professor Glenn Lyons, Mott MacDonald Professor of Future Mobility, UWE**

The event was sponsored by Greener Transport Solutions, Addleshaw Goddard, Transport Times, the Foundation for Integrated Transport and The Transport Knowledge Hub.

It was chaired by Professor Stephen Glaister, Emeritus Professor of Transport and Infrastructure, Imperial College London and LSE.

The topic of the webinar was: *'How the Government can support technical and policy solutions to encourage people to make lower carbon travel choices'*.

Introduction from Claire Haigh, Chief Executive, Greener Transport Solutions

In her opening remarks, Ms Haigh said the first webinar in the series at looked at changes to the wider economy and had produced a clear consensus that wholesale change and a move away from siloed policy thinking was needed.

She said a greater drive towards digitisation was needed to help transport decarbonise, whilst recognising that not everyone could not work from home. A two-tier workforce should not be created.

Ms Haigh also advocated a greater role for both private finance and local authorities in furthering the agenda. This should occur alongside changes in consumer behaviour, including a move away from the next-day consumer delivery culture.

Major transformations would need to happen to our lives, she declared, adding it would be deeply uncomfortable for some members of the public, be challenging for governments and appealing to people's role as citizens.

Ms Haigh said the UK Government's ambitious emissions reduction target could not be met without a credible delivery plan, including decarbonising transport, making public transport cheaper and looking to alternative revenue raising measures to Fuel Duty.

She emphasised that moving to electric vehicles was not a silver bullet and posited that it might be time to move towards a national road pricing scheme.

Video message from Hew Merriman MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee

Mr Merriman was unable to attend the event in person owing to the changing parliamentary timetable, but instead sent a video message.

In his remarks, Mr Merriman said it would require the efforts of the entire transport professional community to drive transport decarbonisation,

He noted that transport accounted for the largest source of carbon dioxide emissions in the UK, noting the Transport Select Committee's work was focused on addressing this area.

Mr Merriman said it was important to reduce emissions from surface transport alongside reducing the numbers on roads.

He referred to work being done by the Select Committee that had found that people were nervous about the range and efficiency of electric vehicles. Mr Merriman advocated plans for a form of subsidy to incentivise the production of electric vehicles.

The Committee would be looking into road pricing because the move to electric vehicles would cost the Treasury £40bn annually in lost revenue from Fuel Duty and Vehicle Excise Duty, Mr Merriman.

He explained that the Committee would be looking to see if road pricing offered a solution, including offering consumers comparative pricing for journeys by road or other forms of transport.

Mr Merriman said he wanted to consider how changes in the Treasury model to looking at how projects, such as transport infrastructure, helped drive the push towards net zero. He added that the Committee's on transport infrastructure would be coming out later this month.

The Government had set important goals including banning the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and the decarbonisation of rail, but the necessary policies should be put in place to deliver these, the Transport Committee Chair said.

He welcomed the introduction of a National Bus Strategy following the call from the Select Committee. Local transport authorities needed more resources and expertise to deliver on greener, innovative solutions for their areas.

Mr Merriman urged local government to get behind the push to engage with the National Bus Strategy. He welcome e-scooters but wanted to see more steps to improve pedestrian safety.

The main mechanism for persuading consumer change on transport habits was through a pricing mechanism, Mr Merriman said.

He noted that the Congestion Charge in London was a benchmark for road pricing but suggested he did not favour a flat pricing structure as was used in the Capital.

Panel discussion

Professor Phil Goodwin, Senior Fellow, Foundation for Integrated Transport

In his remarks, Prof Goodwin said the Government had been agreeing policy statements on reducing transport emissions for over 30 years, but emissions had increased over that time. He added that long-term aims had been subverted by short-term needs.

Prof Goodwin warned that the move to electric vehicles must also occur alongside a reduction in traffic. He called for new lower speed limits to be implemented, 20mph for towns and 60mph for motorways,

There must be a consistency applied to different areas of policy, including parking and road traffic policies, Prof Goodwin said. He advocated that the Government should look to tax the carbon emissions, including from vehicles, which would be an effective revenue raiser.

Prof Goodwin said climate change also affected areas including water run-off and supply, calling for engineering and civil infrastructure spending to directed towards protective measures as opposed to road spending.

Mass transport would become more dependent on buses in the long-run with new rail services in cities, but these should be light rail schemes taking up road space, he said.

Luke Ravenscroft, Lead Director on energy, environment and sustainability, Behavioural Insights Team

Mr Ravenscroft said the Behavioural Insights Team had been set up in 2010 to bring behavioural science and related areas into policymaking.

He added that it was important to consider different components to achieve emissions reductions, with around two-thirds of this depending on behaviour change and uptake of technology.

It was important to build support with the public and carry them along with new policies, Mr Ravenscroft said.

He posited that incentives for electric vehicles could be targeted on groups like businesses or second-hand owners to help improve uptake.

Mr Ravenscroft cited the example of a behavioural intervention working when people moved house, namely encouraging people to switch energy provider to drive down costs.

People were increasingly worried about climate change and were willing to change their transport habits, Mr Ravenscroft said. He added that there was still a lag in people undertaking action to address these sentiments.

Greg Archer, UK Director, Transport & Environment

Mr Archer opened by saying that the rollout of new low and zero emissions technologies in the transport sector was too slow to meet interim emissions reduction targets.

He wanted to see an equivalent amount of government effort focused on reducing car use to match the efforts to encourage the rollout of electric vehicles.

Central government needed to put local authorities in charge of implementing policies to reduce car usage in their areas, Mr Archer said.

“To get drivers out of their cars, we cannot simply hike prices”, Mr Archer said, advocating levelling up active travel and public transport to make them better alternative.

He called for improvements in cycling infrastructure and efforts to make public transport more efficient, including making bus services quicker than travelling by car.

Mr Archer said rural areas needed more imaginative solutions for public transport with on-demand taxis taking people from more remote areas to faster, more regular bus routes between larger conurbations.

He also wanted to see rail services made more efficient with it currently consuming 50% of the transport budget, but only accounting for 10% of passenger journeys. Trains must be made more efficient.

Road pricing had an important role to play but alternatives to single people making car journeys should be found, Mr Archer said.

Suzanne Moir, Partner, Infrastructure, Projects and Energy, Addleshaw Goddard

In her remarks, Ms Moir said local government had a very important role in decarbonising transport, citing work being done by Aberdeen City Council.

She stressed that local authorities had been working hard in following plans from central government and applying for funding,

Aberdeen City Council had driven both the demand and the supply side to fuel the hydrogen fuel economy on a local basis, Ms Moir said.

She declared that local authorities could be the catalyst for change in their local areas.

Ms Moir said the private sector should be assisted in joining the dots between different policy areas and feeling confident to invest.

A genuine partnership between the public and private sectors was needed to facilitate the drive towards a low-carbon economy, she said. This included considering the importance of the public sector’s return on their investment and how they became involved in it.

Ms Moir said she believed that local government should take a lead in making markets work.

Reflection and debate

In her remarks, Professor Jillian Anable, Professor of Transport and Energy, University of Leeds ITS said the transport sector only had until 2030 to achieve four decades of emissions reductions, which would fall mostly on road transport.

She insisted that behavioural change was not a separate art, it was instead an ever-evolving, on-going element that could be accounted for.

Prof Anable said the main obstacles to behaviour change was people believing that their behavioural changes would not make any difference, She added that the changes put in place during the pandemic had been underpinned by laws that everyone had to follow with compensation measures in place for those most affected.

Following on from Prof Anable, Andy Eastlake, Chief Executive, Zemo Partnership said the need to decarbonise transport should be treated as a crisis, but he was encouraged by the energy and appetite for change.

There was a need to continue to focus on areas including: the metrics used, the approach to risk, the inertia in the system and communications.

Mr Eastlake said the original ambition for developing better metrics had gone by the wayside in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. He called for those metrics to be reviewed.

There was a real need for joined up thinking on transport decarbonisation, such as between the departments for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Transport and Environment, Mr Eastlake said.

He called for “an aggressive approach to decarbonising fuels within the existing fleet” as one way of tackling inertia in the system, He called for a “step change” in behaviour of individuals,

Mr Eastlake urged the Government to be “ambitious” and willing to take risks in policymaking.

Following on from Mr Eastlake, Anna Rothnie, Principal Transport Planner, Mott MacDonald said young people had a lot of potential for change, but many fell into the trap of car dependency.

She noted that many young people wanted to opt for the cheapest travel option and praise the announcement of the cheaper train travel service between London and Edinburgh.

Ms Rothnie said lowering the cost of public transport was a social and environment investment, advocating mobility services as a vital one to provide.

She emphasised the importance of communicating the reasons behind policy changes, including the introduction of new taxes.

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Transport Focus said there was a massive gap between what people said and what they did on transport habits.

He referred to “sobering” analysis published by Transport Focus that showed people were “pretty clueless” of what they could do on an individual level to reduce their transport emissions.

Mr Smith said that the decarbonisation of transport should come alongside new taxation and the introduction of a national road pricing scheme.

Paul Campion, Chief Executive, TRL said young people were very well-informed on the need to decarbonise transport,

He noted that the Government could only lead as far as people wanted to follow, noting that central government looked back to the Fuel Duty riots with a great deal of nervousness.

Mr Campion said behavioural change should be driven throughout the political system, including encouraging politicians and officials to change their behaviour. He cited the example of a transport planner in a road building authority being empowered through knowledge to deliver better outcomes.

It was important to understand why policymakers were not being empowered to make changes, Mr Campion said.

Closing off the comments from Greener Transport Council members, Professor Glenn Lyons, Mott MacDonald Professor of Future Mobility, UWE said many of these discussions had been around for 20 to 30 years and hoped there were new elements in the debate to drive change.

He wondered if this might be increasing concerns among the younger members of the population to drive the change needed.

Prof Lyons said only system change could deliver behaviour change and hoped that community groups would multiply to help drive properly.

He was not convinced that it would be a “simple” solution to price and tax carbon, adding alternative solutions needed to be available to drive behavioural change.

“It is the next ten years or less that matter,” Prof Lyons said, adding community-based action was important driving change over the next ten years.

He added that people outside of the transport academia and professional bubble should be consulted to gauge their views on policy solutions,