

LOCAL TRANSPORT TODAY – TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY

Transport and Climate Change – Facing the Carbon Emissions Challenge

Wednesday 25th April should be marked down as an important date in the life of the transport planning profession. David Quarmby's lecture to over 70 members of the Transport Planning Society in London set out the scale of the task we face if we are to deliver our contribution to the climate change challenge. Stark choices lie ahead and major lifestyle and behaviour changes are necessary.

The government has been bold in setting the legally binding commitments in the Climate Change Bill, a world first in fact. But perhaps not surprising in the eyes of many jaundiced transport planners, is that whilst the government has willed the ends it has said little about the means.

The UK has committed to reduce CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2050 but in the face of increasing emissions from the US, China and India, does any of this matter? Well, there is no silver bullet and change will only come through a myriad of initiatives. Nor can we hold any moral authority to persuade others if we don't do it ourselves. Carbon reduction technology could be a business opportunity for the UK and turning ourselves into a low carbon economy will protect us from the vagaries of the geo-politics of future oil and gas supply.

What's transport role in all this? Whilst the UK's carbon emissions have fallen, transport's contribution has risen and now accounts for 29% and rising of the overall figure, with road transport 93% of that. Car emissions have been roughly stable with vehicle efficiencies balancing out continued growth, but it is the emissions from freight vehicles that are rising with no efficiency mitigation. A 75% reduction in transport emissions to 14MtC may be needed to meet the Climate Change Bill target!!!

And, of course, with EU and international flights excluded from the Climate Change Bill, the elephant in the room that no one talks about is aviation. If you add international flights then the transport emissions percentage jumps to 35%. The Aviation White Paper estimates aviation emissions of 15MtC by 2020, more than the total 2050 transport target on its own. Some put aviation emissions higher, where the effect of altitude more than doubles the impact.

So, what's to be done? There is a pressing need for an analysis of the impact and cost of all the possible measures. Work by Robin Hickman and David Banister for the DfT looked at what actions would be needed by working back from the target. They concluded that energy efficiency, hybrid technologies etc will never be sufficient and that behavioural change must be at the centre of decision making.

It is estimated that about 40% of the emissions are down to individual decisions on a day-to-day basis and can be influenced through the familiar work of transport planners. However, will more radical measures be accepted in a

democratic society? How can we improve education and understanding to persuade others to make these changes? When one considers the 1.7m signatories to the recent inaccurate e-petition about road pricing on the Downing Street website then perhaps it's not so surprising that the government's response has lacked ambition, focusing as it does just on technical measures and taxation.

It was David's personal view that the most effective and fairest way is to introduce personal carbon allowances and allow them to be traded so as to incentivise travel behaviour.

The full text of David's lecture can be found on the TPS website www.tps.org.uk

In presenting his lecture David drew on the work carried out by Eleanor Mackay for her TPS Bursary, details of which can also be found on the website.