

Chairman's Manifesto 2009

Thank you....

This is the 12th year of the Society's existence. I am honoured to be taking over as Chair in 2009, through to February 2011.

A quick step back in time to remember how we got to where the society is today...

Back in June 1994 a London transport seminar attended by 70 transport professionals agreed that the sector urgently needed a professional framework. This led to the creation of the Transport planning Forum, which included local government representatives, academics, consultants and others and its objectives were to identify the needs of the profession and to what extent these were being met by existing institutes and organisations. The Forum met throughout 1995 and 1996 and the Transport Planning Society was formed in February 1997. The inaugural meeting was held on 2 July 1997. Fast forward 12 years and we now have a membership base of 978 individual members and 50 corporate and stakeholder members, and we've seen significant growth since the development of the professional transport planner qualification, but more of that later.

So where do we go from here? I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight what I feel are the core elements and priorities for the Society going forward.

Membership

Firstly, the Membership. Members are the lifeblood of the Society, and your continued support enables the Society to go forward. The Society is made up of around 95 per cent individual members with the rest being our Corporate and Stakeholder members, whose support we value greatly. As we face challenging times I'll be asking the Board to double their efforts to ensure we maintain our relationships with all the key public, private and academic organisations. In the past perhaps we haven't always shown these key stakeholders how important there are to the future of the Society, and that's why I'll make it a priority of mine to host the first Corporate and Stakeholder members forum to hear their views on the Society and what more they'd like from the Board. And I mentioned the growth in Membership – we'll be offering free membership for the 100th member of the TPS.

Communication with membership

Secondly, communication with membership. Our bi-annual All Change newsletter, regular e-bulletins, website, events and meetings such as today's AGM all provide an excellent opportunity to communicate with the all our members, both home and away – interestingly we are seeing a rise in the number of overseas applicants keen to either stay in touch or make new connections. During my two years as Chair I'd like to go further and undertake our first ever membership survey to ensure you all have ample opportunity to help shape the future focus of the Society.

Events

Thirdly, events. What better way to meet the Society's mission statement "to facilitate, develop and promote best practices in transport planning and provide a focus for a dialogues between all those engaged in it" than to host events. Further, a well developed and thoughtful events programme is a key way the Society can provide value for money to its members. For just £35 a year you can attend as many TPS events as you want to for free, barring the special events like the Annual Dinner of course, and we feel this provides excellent value for money. The Dinner was a great success last year, and Brian Souter was a formidable after-dinner speaker. Next year I'd like to try something new perhaps a TPS Ball in the summer of 2010. Increasingly the Society has become more active in hosting regional events, and we hope you are appreciating the regular events e-bulletins publicising these. Its worth noting that the Board can only do so much, as can Regional Committees, so we always welcome the offers from Members to champion events. And I couldn't talk about regional events without mentioning the first ever National TPS Pub Quiz, which takes place on Thursday 26 November. We've had an amazing response with nine regional quizzes taking place simultaneously, around 65 teams and over 325 people taking part!! A special thanks to Jamie Wheway, TPS Board Member and Regional Representatives and volunteers for all their efforts in developing what I'm sure will be a great success and a regular occurrence on the TPS events calendar.

The Regions

Fourthly, the Regions. If our Members are the lifeblood of the society, then the Regions are its arteries. We have a healthy network of regions through the UK with an active events programme to boot. This wouldn't happen without the volunteers to lead each region and the supporting committees. It is so important that the Society is able to touch transport planners across the UK and in August 2007 I helped to organise our first regional get together in Birmingham, with a second meeting following in October last year in Manchester. This really does provide an excellent opportunity for the regional leads/chairs to come together to discuss best practice. One region, the North West, has historically been particularly well organised and has been instrumental in producing a best practice guide on important items such as events, budget, marketing. We are making better use of our membership database to enable us to communicate with new members in each region. I really do personally value the efforts of the regional committees and therefore during my period as Chair I've set myself the challenge of going out to visit each region, whether it be to attend an event or a committee meeting – that is of course if they'll have me! Whether I succeed remains to be seen but I'll be sending them a copy of this speech, via the website, so I'm down on record.

Supporting Institutions

Fifthly, not forgetting our supporting institutions. The continued support of the founding professional bodies is key to our future success and credibility, and the Board are grateful to the CILT, ICE, IHT and RTPI for this. Some of you may know that a representative from each body sits on the Board, with full voting rights, and we look to them to appraise the Society of updates from their Institutes. I am keen to strengthen the relationship and will

be looking for opportunities to enable more joint working, whether it be through events, policy consultations or other shared interests. I look forward to talking more with their representatives about their thoughts on the future of the TPS. Some of you, hopefully all of you, will be aware that the TPS is a joint sponsor of the RTPI's Transport Planning Network, a new version of the old RTPI's Transport Panel. We see this as providing the Society with an important opportunity to foster links with the spatial planning sector and we regularly work on joint events to maximise opportunities for members, and see no reason why this approach can't be extended to the other supporting institutions when opportunities arise.

Skills

At the start I mentioned the growth in membership and the background to the society, and the need for a professional framework for transport planners. Running alongside the development of the regions, events, communication with membership has a tremendous amount of work on transport skills and qualifications.

Some of you may recall the Transport Planning Skills Initiative (TPSI) which was formed out of a coalition of the then Departments for Transport, Education and Skills, the TPS, employers, the professional institutions, universities and training providers back in 2002. Amongst other priorities, the TPSI sought to address the need for a recognised professional qualification for transport planners. We have much to be grateful for to TPS members Martin Richards, Keith Mitchell, Andy Costain, and others for their early involvement and continued efforts to get us where we are today. Following the initial development work and subsequent winding of up the TPSI Management Committee in 2003, a Skills Sub Committee for the main TPS Board was formed to oversee the development of National Occupational Standards for Transport Planning and the development of the professional qualifications. The Society worked with GoSkills, in the development of National Occupational Standards which were approved in 2007 and formed the basis of a new TPS professional standards and development scheme, published on 28 April 2008, which are available to stakeholder members of the Society for the implementation and management of their own professional development scheme for transport planners.

In addition the new IHT/TPS Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification, designed to be equivalent states to Chartered Engineer, was launched in March 2008 and is the icing on the cake for a Society which has sought to provide a professional identify for its members. We run the Professional Transport Planner Qualification in partnership with the IHT and you should be aware there is a real cost to the Society in administering the scheme. Going forward we must take care to consider how best to continue supporting the qualification without damaging the financial stability of the Society.

Priorities for the Board

So, finally, priorities for the Board. It is now timely to revisit our individual priority work areas on the Board and develop a new Action Plan, to ensure the Boards activities are targeted for maximum dividends – after all we are all volunteers with busy day jobs so we need focus our efforts where dividends pay most. There is much work to be done on continuing to raise the profile of the profession, supporting younger members through our bursary scheme, which I haven't had time to talk about tonight, along with continuing to provide an identify for the profession. At today's Board meeting we discussed policy themes for the year ahead – more on this to follow in our future All change newsletter. I don't want to reinvent the wheel and I'm conscious that there have been 7 excellent chairmen before me, so I'm going to make it a priority to hold a round table discussion with as many as them as possible within the first six months of my tenure to hear their thoughts as the Society moves through to its teenager years.

The Society has seen a phenomenal growth in membership over the last two years – 293 additional members in two years – or put another way, a 43 percent increase in membership! A lot of this can be put down to the professional qualifications work, but its also due to the events programme and the general desire for transport professionals wanting to belong to a body representing their interests. Recently, contrary to economic trends we have seen continued rising strong growth in membership applications on a consistent month by month basis. As we move through difficult times clearly there is a desire by the profession to enhance their professional development and the TPS welcomes those individuals with open arms.

I look forward to both your and the Board's support of all the priorities I have set out over the next two years.

Thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions you may have.

Victoria Hills

Chair

Transport Planning Society

25 February 2009