

Sustainable Development Commission

Response to Delivering a Sustainable Transport System: Consultation on Planning for 2014 and Beyond



Introduction

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the Government's independent adviser on sustainable development, reporting to the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Through advocacy, advice and appraisal, we help put sustainable development at the heart of Government policy.

The SDC welcomes the Department for Transport's decision to make Sustainability central to their plans for 2014 and beyond as outlined in the *Towards a Sustainable Transport System* and *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* (DaSTS) publications.

This document sets out the SDC's response to the consultation; it does not attempt to respond to the specific questions regarding national infrastructure. Responses are made to questions 1 to 4 and question 7.

Before setting out responses to the specific questions however, it is important to state the SDC's view of the Department for Transport's role and the five high level goals that the department has identified.

The Department for Transport's Role:

Traditionally the department's primary role has been to ensure that the infrastructure is available to meet people's transport demands. However there is an increasing recognition that this role should include "helping people reduce their need to travel or switch to lower-carbon modes" as is stated in the Secretary of State for Transport's foreword to the DaSTS report.

The report of the Committee on Climate Change¹ has its key recommendations for tackling climate change as "The UK should aim to reduce Kyoto greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 (77% below 2005 levels). This would be an appropriate UK contribution to a global deal aiming to reduce Kyoto greenhouse gas emissions. The 80% target should apply to the sum of all sectors of the UK economy, including international aviation and shipping. To the extent that international aviation and shipping emissions are not reduced by 80%, more effort would have to be made in other sectors...."

The UK transport sector has a huge role to play in meeting this challenging target and the DfT will need to be bold in its approach which will need to include a radical rethinking of the infrastructure for the country in the 21st Century. This response highlights some of the opportunities that are available to reduce the need to travel through technology, for example, home working, home shopping, and video-conferencing. The need to travel can be further reduced through intelligent and integrated planning policy. Helping people to switch to lower-carbon modes requires an understanding of the psychology of people's transport choices. While the department already has experience in all these fields, in the transition to a lower carbon, lower energy economy, it will be necessary to adjust the balance of the department's work away from increasing mobility and towards other ways of meeting the needs of a sustainable economy and society.

However the Department for Transport's five goals, as stated in the DaSTS report do not yet recognise this wider remit for the department.

¹ <http://hmccc.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/TSO-ClimateChange.pdf>

There is also a concern, which has been recognised by the Department, that the goals of ‘supporting economic growth’ and ‘tackling climate change’ are in conflict. As a result the SDC recommends that the goal of ‘supporting economic growth’ is reworded as detailed in the next section.

The Department for Transport’s Goals:

The consultation document sets out the five broad goals that the department has identified for transport policy as follows:

- to **support** national **economic** competitiveness and **growth**, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
- to reduce transport’s emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of **tackling climate change**;
- to **contribute to better safety, security and health** and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health;
- to **promote** greater **equality of opportunity** for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
- to **improve quality of life** for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a **healthy natural environment**.

While we recognise that the department has engaged with stakeholders over the course of the first half of last year and has, as a result, slightly revised the wording of these goals, we are disappointed that the consultation questions do not appear to include provision for any further modification of these goals.

While the SDC supports four of the high level goals the Department of Transport has identified, we believe that the goal of supporting economic growth should be reworded. This is necessary to ensure that it is compatible with the desire to achieve a truly sustainable transport system as well as to reflect the need for the Department to expand its role from the current position as “transport provider” to becoming the lead Department in ensuring people are able to connect to each other and to the goods and services they need.

The SDC will shortly be setting out in detail its views on the relationship between sustainability, wellbeing and economic growth.² In line with the findings of this work, the SDC suggests the Department’s goal regarding economic growth should be reworded as follows:

- to **enable people to connect to each other** and to the goods and services they require in order to meet their needs **and support a sustainable economy**.

The government defined a sustainable economy in the UK’s sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*³ as:

² See forthcoming report *Prosperity without Growth* – Sustainable Development Commission, 2009

³ *Securing the Future* – Defra, HM Government, March 2005

“Achieving a Sustainable Economy: Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.”

Alternatively the department could choose to use the Government’s definition of sustainable growth:

“economic growth that can be sustained and is within environmental limits, but also enhances the environment and social welfare, and avoids greater extremes in future economic cycles”

The result of revising the wording of this goal is that there should no longer be a conflict in simultaneously achieving all the goals. Ensuring there are no inherent conflicts between the five high level goals will be essential to the potential of success in delivering all five.

Answers to specific consultation questions

Question 1: Are there any additional challenges that we should add to the matrix? Or any challenges we should delete?

See Annex 1

Question 2: Are there ways in which we could make any of the challenges clearer and easier to understand or measure?

See re-worded matrix in Annex 1.

Question 3: Which of the challenges do you consider as most important?

In analysing which challenges are most important it is important to consider the potential consequences of not meeting those challenges. While all five high level goals in their suggested reworded form are essential to a sustainable future, the SDC considers that the challenge of tackling climate change should be prioritised on the basis of the scale and urgency of the changes required and the potential consequences of not meeting this goal.

However it is important to re-state that meeting all five of the goals (with the suggested rewording) is essential to long term sustainability.

Question 4: Do you agree central government should lead on the development of solutions for the national network and international networks and that regional and local government should lead for the city and regional networks?

The SDC does agree that this arrangement is appropriate provided that central government guidance on how to develop truly sustainable regional and local transport solutions is developed and distributed, and that measures to ensure that regional and local government transport plans meet sustainability requirements, are in place.

Question 5: Are there any strategic corridors that should be added to the national network? Or any corridors that should be removed from it?

No response

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions on how best to ensure that solutions for the national network and international networks and for the city and regional networks are developed in a joined-up way?

No response

Question 7: Do you have any other comments on the approach, set out in this section, to taking forward the proposals contained in *Towards a Sustainable Transport System*?

Given the wealth of historic data regarding the impacts and outcomes of different transport interventions, the concept of “modal agnosticism” when considering proposed solutions to transport challenges needs to be revised.

One of the issues with the current approach of comparing various transport proposals side by side is that in many instances a long standing and well developed proposal to increase capacity exists. There is often however, neither funding nor resources to develop a similarly well developed proposal for other potential interventions such as demand reduction and behaviour change measures. As a result, comparisons made between different options are unbalanced.

The SDC therefore recommends that DfT considers implementing a hierarchical approach. We would propose the following sequence should be used:

1. Measures to reduce demand
2. Measures to shift to more sustainable / more space efficient modes (e.g. cycling, walking, public transport). This may include improving facilities for cycling and walking.
3. Measures to promote more efficient use of existing modes (e.g. car sharing, measures to increase load factors on public transport).
4. Measures to increase capacity for powered transport (only once 1-3 have been exhausted).

Where a new transport intervention is deemed to be required, solutions would be assessed and introduced in this order until the requirements were satisfied. At each stage proposals would be assessed for social, economic and environmental sustainability before being introduced.

Questions 8-12:

No response is given to these questions.

Annex 1

	Tackle climate change	<u>Enable people to connect to each other and support a sustainable economy</u>	Promote equality of opportunity
Cross-network (national policy)	1 Deliver quantified net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the Climate Change Bill and EU targets.	2 Ensure a competitive transport industry by simplifying and improving regulation to benefit transport users and providers and <u>non-transport users whilst</u> maximising the value for money from transport spending.	3 Enhance social inclusion by enabling disadvantaged people to connect with employment opportunities, key services, social networks and goods through improving accessibility, availability, affordability and acceptability.
Cities and regional networks	1 Deliver quantified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions within cities and regional networks, taking account of cross-network policy measures.	2 Reduce lost productive time including by maintaining or improving the reliability and predictability of journey times on key local routes for business, commuting and freight. 3 Improve the connectivity and access to all labour markets of key business centre. 4 Support the delivery of housing, and in particular the PSA target of increasing supply to 240,000 net additional dwellings per annum by 2016 by facilitating the conditions for the housing to be delivered, while limiting increased congestion. 5 Ensure local transport networks are resistant and adaptable to shocks and impacts such as adverse weather, accidents, terrorist attacks and impacts of climate change.	6 Enhance social inclusion and the regeneration of deprived or remote areas by enabling disadvantaged people to connect with employment opportunities, key local services, social networks and goods through improving accessibility, availability, affordability and acceptability. 7 Contribute to the reduction in the gap between economic growth rates for different regions.
National networks	1 Deliver quantified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions on national networks taking account of cross-network policy measures.	2 Reduce lost productive time on national transport networks, including by maintaining or improving the reliability and predictability of journey times for business and freight. 3 Ensure national transport networks are resistant and adaptable to shocks and impacts such as adverse weather, accidents, terrorist attacks and impacts of climate change.	4 Enhance social inclusion by ensuring national transport networks are accessible and acceptable for disadvantaged people. 5 Contribute to the reduction in the gap between economic growth rates for different regions.
International networks	<u>Ensure international aviation and shipping are included in a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid dangerous climate change.</u> 1 Ensure forecast any growth in international aviation's <u>climate change effects emissions is</u> are matched by equivalent <u>or greater</u> transport reductions or offset by <u>reductions in transport or</u> other sectors. 2 Increase the carbon efficiency of international	3 Reduce lost productive time on international networks by maintaining or improving efficiency, predictability and reliability of international end-to-end journeys. 4 Ensure passengers and freight have access to globally competitive levels of international connectivity. 5 Ensure international networks are resistant and adaptable to shocks and impacts such as adverse weather, accidents, terrorist attacks and impacts of climate change.	6 Improve accessibility for persons of reduced mobility on international networks. 7 Contribute to the reduction in the gap between economic growth rates for different regions.

	<p>shipping. Forecast <u>Any</u> growth <u>in climate change effects</u> to be offset by reductions in other sectors.</p>		
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Contribute to better safety, security and health	Improve quality of life
<p>4 Reduce the risk of death, security or injury due to transport accidents, <u>particularly to vulnerable groups such as children, pedestrians and cyclists.</u></p> <p>5 Reduce social and economic costs of transport to public health, including air quality impacts <u>and noise.</u></p> <p>6 Improve the health of individuals by encouraging and enabling more physically active travel.</p> <p>7 Reduce vulnerability of transport networks to terrorist attack.</p>	<p>8 Reduce wherever possible the negative effects of <u>Manage</u> transport-related noise. in a way that is consistent with the emerging national noise strategy and other wider Government goals.</p> <p>9 Minimise <u>Reduce wherever possible</u> the impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions that deliver long-term environmental benefits.</p> <p>10 Improve the experience of end-to-end journeys for transport users <u>whilst ensuring the negative effects of transport on non-users are reduced.</u></p>
<p>8 Reduce the risk of death or injury due to transport accidents, <u>particularly to vulnerable groups such as children, pedestrians and cyclists.</u></p> <p>9 Improve the health of individuals by encouraging and enabling more physically active travel.</p> <p>10 Reduce the social and economic costs of transport to public health, including air quality impacts <u>and noise.</u></p> <p>11 Reduce vulnerability of city and regional transport networks to terrorist attack.</p> <p>12 Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour on city and regional transport networks.</p>	<p>13 Reduce the number of people, and dwellings, <u>green spaces and public buildings (particularly schools and hospitals)</u> exposed to high levels of noise from road and rail networks consistent with implementation of Action Plans prepared under the Environmental Noise Directive.</p> <p>14 Minimise <u>Reduce wherever possible</u> the impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions that deliver long-term environmental benefits.</p> <p>15 Improve the quality of transport integration into streetscapes and the urban environment <u>and work to ensure that demand for motorised transport is reduced where possible.</u></p> <p>16 Improve the journey experience of transport users of urban, regional and local networks, including at the interfaces with national networks and international networks <u>whilst ensuring the negative effects of transport on non-users are reduced.</u></p> <p>17 Enhance well-being and sense of community by creating more opportunities for social contact and better access to <u>positive leisure</u> activities and the natural environment, <u>preferably by walking and cycling</u></p>

<p>6 Reduce the risk of death or injury due to transport accidents, <u>particularly to vulnerable groups such as children, pedestrians and cyclists.</u></p> <p>7 Reduce the social and economic costs of transport to public health, including air quality impacts <u>and noise.</u></p> <p>8 Reduce vulnerability of transport networks to terrorist attack.</p>	<p>9 Reduce the number of people, and dwellings, <u>green spaces and public buildings (particularly schools and hospitals)</u> exposed to high levels of noise from road and rail networks consistent with implementation of Action Plans prepared under the Environmental Noise Directive.</p> <p>10 <u>Reduce wherever possible</u> Minimise the impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions which deliver long-term environmental benefits.</p> <p>11 Improve the journey experience of transport users of national networks including at the interfaces with local networks and international networks <u>whilst ensuring the negative effects of transport on non-users are reduced.</u></p> <p>12 Enhance wellbeing and sense of community by creating more opportunities for social contact and better access to positive activities and the natural environment, <u>preferably by walking and cycling.</u></p>
<p>8 Reduce the risk of death or injury due to transport accidents, <u>particularly to vulnerable groups such as children, pedestrians and cyclists.</u></p> <p>9 Reduce the social and economic costs of transport to public health, including air quality impacts <u>and noise.</u></p> <p>10 Work internationally and nationally to reduce vulnerability of international networks to terrorist attack.</p>	<p>11 Limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise <u>especially vulnerable groups such as children.</u></p> <p>12 Minimise the impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions which deliver long-term environmental benefits.</p> <p>13 Improve the experience of end-to-end journeys for international transport users.</p>