

Submission

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Decarbonisation of Transport call for ideas

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The LGA has spent the past year working with the University of Leeds on a series of decarbonisation briefings. We have highlighted seven different areas where councils can take action to decarbonise transport. We chose these areas after facilitated workshops exploring the ways councils can have greatest impact. This has resulted in briefing notes on the following topics:

- Decarbonisation ambition and targets
- The role of buses
- Accelerating the uptake of electric vehicles
- Climate Smart Parking Policies
- Land Use, Localisation and Accessibility
- Travelling less and the role of online opportunities
- Growing Cycle Use

The full series of briefings will be published in early September and will be available [here](#).

We have included some of the key actions that our work highlighted below. They come from the key actions highlighted for both councils and the government in the briefs. We believe the ideas they contain are some of the simplest steps we can take to decarbonise transport at a local level and the DfT should support the ambitions of councils in these areas.

The role of buses

To increase bus use, there needs to be continued appeal to the current user base, alongside strategies to attract new users, particularly car drivers who could switch to the bus. The key variables which will define that choice are (compared to driving):

1. Journey time and reliability
2. Relative cost
3. Quality of the door to door experience

Decisions on fares, routes and frequencies are out of the hands of local government, with the exception of the small proportion of tendered, socially necessary services. However, it is the relative cost and the comparative journey time experience that matters. The joint goal of local authorities and bus operators needs to be to create a virtuous circle of rising patronage and service levels with lower fares which then supports further investment.

Partnership working for growing bus use is best done through a bus strategy and delivered through a bus quality partnership. The Bus Services Act 2017 provides for local transport authorities to develop enhanced partnerships with bus operators, with agreements covering a wider range of matters including fares.

The realities of coronavirus for the industry are that partnership working will now become even more important. There are arguments for different regulatory models to now be tried in different areas. There is no “one-size fits all” solution.

Accelerating the uptake of electric vehicles

Councils are ambitious about the transition for electric vehicles and over the long term they offer a way to reduce the emissions associated with transport. However we

must be realistic about the current entire life cycle carbon costs of manufacturing and disposing of batteries and electric vehicles. Whilst the entire lifecycle costs of an electric vehicle are lower than an ICE there is not the level of saving needed to reach net zero if we replaced conventional vehicles with electric vehicles on a one for one basis. Councils support for electrifying vehicles must be viewed in this context and we must see it only as part of the solution.

Charging infrastructure

Proactively plan for on-street residential charging

Local authorities can undertake analysis of current authority-wide car ownership patterns, in combination with the data on socio-demographic characteristics.

This can be used to identify streets that have both the correct demographic profile for 'early adopters', together with on-street parking pressures to locate streets that might benefit from charging points. Additionally, local authorities can set up a scheme for residents to request a charge point in their street to gauge interest from the bottom up.

Adapt planning guidance for new housing and businesses

At the time of writing, a response was still forthcoming from the Government to its consultation, 'Electric Vehicle Chargepoints in Residential and Non-residential buildings' (June to October 2019).

This could alter buildings regulations so that new housing and commercial developers will need to increase the provision of active charging points at all properties with parking spaces, and that this will no longer be negotiable with local authorities.

Slow charge points will be required in residential developments, whilst fast or rapid charge points will be required in retail and leisure areas.

Develop a public rapid charging infrastructure

To help overcome range anxiety, local authorities can set up rapid charging infrastructure in authority-owned car parks, leisure centres and other facilities.

Authorities can also work with businesses, commercial areas and transport hubs such as ferry terminals, airports and rail stations) to set up rapid charging infrastructure.

Early liaison with Distribution Network Operators to understand costs and sub-station capacity is essential. The spring Budget 2020 pledged £500 million for rapid charge network development, managed through the Office for Low Emission Vehicles.

We must also be mindful of other emerging ULEV technologies like hydrogen and their potential to decarbonise vehicles. Especially larger vehicles which will be the most difficult to move to battery electric propulsion. We need need to consider the full mix of potential ULEV technologies.

Raising awareness

Information alone is not sufficient to influence consumer behaviour but is vital in combination with some of the other recommendations made here.

One of the problems with environmental information is that it can sometimes make rather generalised statements, not tailored to the local area and the particular choices, issues and environmental trade-offs where people live.

Low Emission Zones, where they are being established, will encourage a range of people and businesses to re-evaluate their vehicles. Linking to relevant information from Low Emission Zone sites will effectively target potential switchers.

Key Organisations and User Groups

Specific user groups such as taxis have their own usage profiles and charge-point requirements.

Holding knowledge-sharing events with existing adopters can help with myth-busting and raise awareness of grants for vehicle purchase and charge point installation. As can active engagement with businesses to support the transition of fleets to EV.

Local incentives

There are a range of potential discounts or fee structures which can be used to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.

The UK government has announced plans to give EVs special green number plates, so that they can more easily benefit from local incentives such as free parking, use of bus lanes, and accessing areas cut-off from ICE vehicles. However, from an integrated carbon reduction strategy perspective, such privileges have a very weak case.

Where such incentives are used it is essential that there is a clear sunset date announced at the launch, setting out when those privileges will be removed, to ensure that the incentive is clearly understood as a stimulus to early adoption and not an ongoing subsidy.

Discounts will be most effective in areas with Ultra-Low Emission Zones. Whilst ULEZ schemes target air quality and removing the most polluting vehicles, EVs and PHEVs provide a potential compliant vehicle option.

Local authorities can act to stimulate access to shared electric vehicles through providing on-street sites for car clubs and requiring car club provision as part of planning obligations for new developments.

Own fleets

As major employers, movers of goods and people, and procurers of services, there are a wide range of electrification and cleaner fleet options through which local authorities can show leadership, drawing on the grant funding available.

Whilst there can be additional upfront costs for electrification, the large number of fleets now making a partial or full shift to electric shows that there are medium-term paybacks available in operating costs.

Climate Smart Parking Policies

Get parking right for new developments

There is a need to rethink the relationship between housing locations and levels of residential parking. Otherwise, in striving to deliver on ambitious housing targets, national and local governments will also increase car ownership and use.

Locating housing in areas well served by public transport allows the reduction of parking in ways which support building at higher density. This in turn reinforces the viability of public transport.

Key policy actions for new developments

First, it is essential to locate housing in the right places. New developments in more accessible and central locations generate less car travel, whilst increased residential densities are associated with lower transport CO2 emissions. Parking for accessible developments can, and should, be limited.

Second, local authorities can work with developers to ensure that compelling alternative modes of transport are built in to developments from day one.

These can include walking and cycling routes, public transport, and shared mobility solutions such as car clubs. These can be linked together through Mobility as a Service led integrated pricing.

It is important that councils retain the ability to plan at the local level. Proposals in the Government's recent Planning White Paper and increased moved to permitted development, will make it more difficult to ensure that new developments contribute to decarbonisation.

Pavement parking is recognised as having disruptive and detrimental effects, particularly those with limited mobility. Following from the 2019 Transport Committee report, the Government is currently considering a nationwide ban on pavement parking which the LGA supports.

The design of parking provision also makes a difference. In residential locations, distance from parking can have a strong impact on the decision to use the car to travel, especially for short distances. When parking is closer to walk to than public transport then the car usually wins.

In developments where the provision of spaces is unbundled from the cost of the housing (i.e. spaces can be bought or leased) then take up of parking is lower. Some 'car free' or 'car lite' developments provide parking, but on this basis, and at the periphery of the development.

Work with employers to reduce commuter parking

There can be mutual gains from local authorities and larger employers working together to reduce the amount of parking offered on site. This is an effective way of reducing single occupancy car commuting, and there are several types of intervention to choose from.

For example, for both new developments or changes of use, planning applications can be used to influence parking policy by amending parking provision and obtaining obligations through Section 106 agreements, funding car club vehicles for example.

These obligations can include a requirement to improve active travel and public transport connections, and to provide other mitigation measures to reduce traffic impacts.

Workplace travel plans, which are focused on reducing car commuting can also be very effective. Parking cash-out schemes can also be used which, rather than giving employees a car parking permit for the whole year, reward people for every day the permit is not used or for rescinding the permit.

Powers for local authorities to introduce a workplace parking levy (WPL) were brought in by the Transport Act 2000. Workplace parking levies can be introduced for any business with more than 11 employees.

Local authorities can evaluate the value of a workplace's parking according to the number of parking spaces. The employer must then choose to pay the levy or pass the cost on to employees.

Park and Ride

Park and Ride can reduce the number of commuters or shoppers who drive all the way into a city centre. Park and Ride bus services may be particularly well suited for electrification as the services are typically on relatively short routes and can build in top-up charging at the end sites.

However, to date, Park and Ride's ability to reduce traffic overall has been limited. The reasons for this are two-fold.

First, Park and Ride attracts some users who would previously have used a train, bus or bike for their whole journey.

Second, unless the addition of Park and Ride spaces is accompanied by other measures in the town or city centre, such as a reduction in parking capacity, increased parking prices, and reallocation of road space from cars to buses, cyclists and pedestrians, then this adds additional options but does little to impact on the demand for car use. It is only in places where Park and Ride is part of a wider strategy of reducing car access to town and city centres that the benefits can really be delivered.

Land Use, Localisation and Accessibility

All planning decisions matter for decarbonising transport. Although any given individual decision on a housing development or commercial site might seem small in terms of overall transport demand, every planning decision builds-in an inherent advantage to one kind of transport or another that lasts for decades.

The kinds of development being permitted give a very public signal about how seriously a local authority is taking the climate emergency. For a development to be truly low carbon, the strategic location, the layout and urban design, the land use mix and the transport provision need to be got right.

Major new workplaces and other trip generating developments must be located where they are easily accessible by active travel (cycling and walking) and public transport.

For local planning and transport to support carbon reduction there are three key areas of influence:

- spatial planning and land use planning
- 'accessibility planning'
- attractive and liveable neighbourhoods

Getting spatial planning and land-use planning right

At the heart of using the planning system to reduce transport emissions is the need to make it easy for people to get to the facilities and places they want or need to visit. The relative journey time of car and non-car modes is a key factor

Planning existing places for accessibility and localisation

Using planning powers and techniques to deliver low-carbon living is not just about the design of new developments. It is also about the management of existing built-up areas and their communities.

The purpose of most trips people make is to access the activities they need or want to do: jobs, schools, healthcare, shops, leisure, and socialising. Providing good transport is one means of ensuring people get the accessibility they need, but it is not the only tool in the box.

The concept of the “20-minute neighbourhood” as a long-term planning strategy has been proposed as an alternative to car-dependency. This is the vision of neighbourhoods where people’s daily needs are within a 20-minute walk of their home.

Part of this agenda is about maintaining and enhancing local facilities in existing neighbourhoods. However, it also recognises that the vast majority of developments built in recent decades favour access by car.

Accessibility planning for decarbonising transport, therefore, is also about organising transport solutions to existing accessibility challenges.

Local authorities are naturally at the centre of an approach that joins up land use planning, local transport planning and the provision of local public services.

Travelling less and the role of online opportunities

Supporting remote working

Employment is changing. There has been a slow but steady rise in people reporting that they mainly work from home (5 per cent prior to coronavirus), and in people reporting that they sometimes work from home, from 23 per cent (2008) to 30 per cent (2020). Fewer people work from one fixed location and working hours are becoming less defined around the traditional 9 to 5 pattern. To date however, evidence for the carbon reduction benefits of working from home has been limited, for two reasons:

First, early adopters of remote working traded fewer commute days for longer commute distances. Commuting less allowed them to benefit from cheaper housing further from the city. Non-urban living is associated with greater car dependence for all travel (not just commute), so there is a risk that this move to longer, less frequent, commutes, could create greater car use overall.

Second, the transport carbon saving from homeworking needs to be offset against the increased carbon from domestic heating during the working day. Generally, per worker, homes are less energy efficient than offices and this matters a lot in winter.

Coronavirus has changed the debate on remote working. Until recently, the option to work remotely was only offered to a minority of workers. During lockdown, however,

many roles previously not eligible for home working, became, overnight, 'must work from home' roles.

Similarly, meetings which previously had to be attended in person, rapidly shifted online. As social distancing restrictions persist for office work, there is currently great scope to reduce commuting and business travel for an extended period, and for much of this to stick in the long-term.

What is needed to support low-carbon remote working?

- Provision of high-quality broadband of reliable speed and wider geographical coverage.
- Re-energising workplace travel plans and working with businesses in your area to plan for a managed lower-carbon return to work.
- Staggered opening hours and flexible working weekly rotas.
- Promotion of lift-sharing, and prioritised discounted car-parking for car-sharers.
- Discounted public transport passes and ticketing schemes which reward loyalty rather than daily use of the system.
- Encouraging the use of parking cash-out schemes which reward staff for lift-sharing or leaving their cars at home.
- Continuing to support programmes of home energy efficiency and insulation.

Replacing business travel with online meetings

Business travel or 'personal travel in the course of work' is a major source of transport carbon emissions, which has great potential for substitution by online communication.

Business travel accounts for only 3 per cent of total trips made (excluding short walks), but 9 per cent of all miles travelled in England. This is because business trips are, on average, over two and a half times longer than the average trip.

To ensure this shift is maintained there are two key actions:

First, business travel should form part of all business engagement around workplace travel planning. Local authorities are also major procurers of services and can build requirements around business travel reduction into their procurement processes.

Second, local authorities can also take a leadership role in reducing unnecessary car-based work journeys.

Managing increased online delivery

It is highly likely that online shopping reduces transport carbon emissions compared to conventional shopping, but the calculation of the exact carbon saving from online shopping is complex.

The shift to online shopping is not an entirely positive one from a local authority perspective, as reduced footfall in local shopping areas impacts on retail vitality. Social distancing restrictions are further accelerating these trends, with 33 per cent of all sales being made online in May 2020 – around double the pre-pandemic levels.

Whatever a local authority might think of online retail, it represents a major social and economic change which has not yet peaked. The evidence seems to show that, in transport decarbonisation terms at least, online retail offers some opportunities.

What is needed to reduce emissions from delivery vehicles?

- Introducing low emission zones to drive up the environmental performance of delivery vehicles.
- Supporting and funding the development of cargo bikes and e-cargo bike schemes for last-mile delivery in town and city centres.
- Ensuring that there is provision within the Local Plan for adequate goods warehousing space, so that last mile deliveries have suitable coordination points.
- Working with retailers to develop a comprehensive and easy to access drop-box locker and shop-based collect and returns network.
- Providing adequate safe delivery space to avoid vehicles blocking pavements, cycle lanes or carriageway with associated safety and congestion risks.

Enforcing no stopping regulations, prioritising areas with higher levels of vulnerable road users.

Growing Cycle Use

Provide safe and secure road space for cyclists

Safety is the biggest concern among those who would like to cycle more often. Road safety and security must be addressed to deliver a significant shift in active modal share to cycling. The introduction of high-quality segregated bike infrastructure encourages cycling. The development of a network, rather than ad-hoc pieces of infrastructure, is also important for growing cycling levels.

Make key activities easy to reach

Direct connections make cycling more appealing, so network planning needs to pay attention to providing easy access to key destinations (education, employment, healthcare, leisure). Cities which have achieved high bike mode shares have good permeability, meaning cyclists benefit from measures such as routes blocked off to car traffic and use of one-way streets with a contra-flow bike lane. Planning for secure bike parking at key public transport access points is also important to ensure intermodal bike-bus or bike-rail journeys can extend the reach of cycling.

Make cycling part of the local culture

Providing the right sort of network and facilities matters, but the effects can be amplified by promotion and integration with activities in schools, workplaces, and town centres (such as Bike Week and Sky Ride). A number of cities worldwide have introduced car-free Sundays, where roads are closed to cars and given over to cyclists and pedestrians (often with space for traders and cultural activities) with the intention of changing the way people think about space and how it is shared.

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