

# Westminster Hall Debate: Net zero targets and decarbonising transport

## House of Commons

Tuesday 4 February 2020



### Key messages:

- Research shows that even with widespread electrification traffic needs to reduce by anywhere between 20-60 per cent by 2030 to meet the greenhouse gas emission targets in the Paris Climate Change agreement<sup>1</sup>. If we are to meet these challenges, a dramatic step change is needed.
- Effective decarbonisation solutions will need to be place based and locally led. A solution that works in an urban area may not be appropriate in a rural context. Councils are best placed to understand the unique context of their local transport networks and need to be empowered to deliver the solutions.
- To electrify the vehicle fleet, a large-scale investment is needed to create a comprehensive network of electric vehicle charging points. Extra funding for this must either come from private investment or national government. Local government cannot afford to deliver this alone
- Councils want to improve active travel infrastructure. To do so, councils need the Government to provide them with long term guaranteed infrastructure funding to allow them to maintain infrastructure and deliver improvements in a comprehensive and long-term way.
- The Government's new £220 million funding package to improve bus services across urban and rural areas is welcome. Nevertheless, councils are still facing significant funding challenges. The LGA has produced analysis showing a £700 million funding gap for the concessionary fares scheme. This means there is increasing pressure on councils' ability to provide socially useful but financially unviable bus services. The Government needs to fully fund the scheme, and we are calling on the Government to address this in the Budget or its upcoming National Bus Strategy.
- We are calling for the devolution of the bus service operator grant and for all councils to be given the ability to franchise local services.
- Across the country, councils are taking urgent actions to combat the negative impacts of climate change and to deliver zero net carbon by 2030. The LGA is committed to supporting councils to continue on this journey, and [our climate change hub](#) brings together an overview of our sector-led improvement offer, information on upcoming events as well as relevant publications and best practice case studies.

# Briefing

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<sup>1</sup> Friends of the Earth (Feb 2019) 'More than electric cars'  
<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/print/pdf/node/17>

## Background

### Achieving Net Zero in Transport

Emissions from road transport contribute to 21 per cent of UK greenhouse gas emissions. To meet the Government's net zero target, we need to transition to electric vehicles. Studies by UCL and the Tyndall Centre show that, in addition to switching to electric vehicles, traffic needs to reduce by anywhere between 20-60 per cent by 2030 to meet the UK's Paris agreement targets<sup>2</sup>.

Current estimates suggest we are far from meeting that target. Recent Government evidence to the Science and Technology Select Committee showed that the estimated impact of all sustainable travel interventions since 2009 was a reduction in the number of car kilometres travelled per year of just 0.5 per cent by 2021<sup>3</sup>. A step change is necessary.

### Electrification

The Government has indicated that it wants to see a large-scale electrification of the vehicle fleet<sup>4</sup>. To do so, a comprehensive network of electric vehicle charging points will be required. Extra funding for this must either come from private investment or national government. Local government cannot afford to deliver this alone

Councils have a key role to play as the UK moves towards electrification. The LGA has produced a guide, "[Councils in charge: making the case for electric charging investment](#)," to help councillors understand the current landscape for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and how to engage with their officers, colleagues and the wider public with more confidence.

### Active Travel

To meet the challenges of reducing emissions, improving the nation's health, and embracing new technology in a socially equitable way, we need to design places that encourage active travel.

That is a long-term challenge that councils are ready to embrace. This can only be achieved if councils have long term guaranteed infrastructure funding to pay for the required improvements. The Government must respond to the National Infrastructure Assessment and enact its recommendation that councils should have five-year guaranteed funding plans to maintain infrastructure and deliver improvements in a comprehensive and long-term way.

### Public Transport

Transport is the key link between residents and their local amenities and services. The Government's new £220 million funding package to improve urban and rural bus services is welcome, as is the Government's pledge to bring forward the UK's first long-term National Bus Strategy.

Nevertheless, local government still faces a significant challenge working within limited budgets to maintain infrastructure and transport networks across the most remote areas of the country. We have also produced analysis showing that concessionary fares, the national

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<sup>2</sup> Friends of the Earth (Feb 2019) 'More than electric cars' <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/print/pdf/node/17>

<sup>3</sup> Science and Technology Committee (2019) 'Clean Growth: Technologies for meeting the UK's emissions reduction targets' <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/1454/145408.htm>

<sup>4</sup> It is important to acknowledge that there is embedded carbon in the manufacture of these vehicles, and this must be considered as part of our carbon budgets.

'free bus pass' scheme, is underfunded by an estimated £700 million. This means there is increasing pressure on councils' ability to provide socially useful but financially unviable bus services. The Government needs to fully fund the scheme to enable councils to better connect their communities. We are calling on the Government to address these issues in its upcoming Budget and National Bus Strategy.

We have called for the devolution of the bus service operator grant and for all councils to be given the ability to franchise local services. This will enable councils to protect vital bus routes and give them the funding they need to provide an effective and efficient bus service.

To tackle congestion and improve air quality, it is important to encourage people to use public transport. Nottingham Council is demonstrating best practice in this area and has introduced a work place parking levy. This has led to a significant reduction in traffic, and the money generated by the levy has been invested into public transport, most notably to fund the second phase of the city's tram network.

### **Place-based solutions**

Decarbonising transport in rural communities will be a key challenge. Many solutions, such as greater electrification, active travel and public transport, are more difficult and less economically viable in less densely populated rural transport networks.

The solutions we employ will have to be place based and locally led. Councils are best placed to understand the unique context of their local transport networks and need to be empowered to deliver the solutions.

### **LGA Decarbonisation**

Across the country, councils are taking urgent actions to combat the negative impacts of climate change and to deliver zero net carbon by 2030. The LGA declared a climate emergency at its annual conference last July and is committed to supporting councils to continue on this journey. [Our climate change hub](#) brings together an overview of our sector-led improvement offer, information on upcoming events as well as relevant publications and best practice case studies.

The LGA has commissioned the Institute of Transport Studies at Leeds University to provide good practice and policy support to the LGA and councils on the decarbonisation of transport. The LGA will be publishing a series of briefings for councils over the coming months.