Transport decarbonisation plan: call for ideas

Your details

Q1. Your (used for contact details only):

name? Transition Tavistock

email? travel@transitiontavistock.org.uk

Q2. Are you responding:

on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation details

Q9. What is the approximate total number of employees in your organisation?

1 to 29

Q10. What best describes your organisation?

Environmental group

Share your views

Q11. What do you think government should be doing to reduce the greenhouse gases that are produced from:

cars?	Given the dominance of car travel, measures to reduce demand are essential. Government should proactively work to ensure the negative impact of advice favouring cars over public transport during the coronavirus is reversed during the recovery. Shift policy focus to mobility as a service and away from the assumption of individual car ownership. This is an important cultural change to achieve, even though practical alternatives for rural residents may be some decades away. Public attention in our area tends to focus on protecting car parking, because too many consider this their only travel option. Electric car take up in Devon is low, and significant investment in chargepoints is needed for people to see it as a safe choice for a rural area. As well as locations attractive to tourists and people breaking a long journey, they need to be convenient to the many residents, both rural and urban, who do not have a parking space beside their home. Signpost accurate and up to date information on the practicalities, costs and benefits of electric car use. In our conversations with the public at events we have found that myths persist. Ban advertising of high emission cars – the same logic as banning cigarette advertising. Ensure that advertising of non-plug in hybrids points out that the energy source is entirely petrol. Make 20mph the default speed limit in residential estates and shopping streets and encourage pedestrianisation of high streets. Encourage both public and private employers to consolidate the recent increase in home working and remote access to services, breaking the pattern of rush hour traffic which results in polluting and wasteful congestion.
buses and coaches?	Facilitate and incentivise collaboration among bus companies to ensure services are designed around passenger needs rather than profit, timetables link up in a way that aids multi-leg journeys, and ticket offers are scoped to allow use across boundaries. Give local authorities powers to ensure there are integrated networks of bus routes connecting key settlements and services, so that buses are well used. Help build user confidence in public transport, so that usage levels rise and thus lower unit cost per mile in greenhouse gas emissions.
vans and lorries?	Signpost information accurate and up to date information on the practicalities, costs and benefits of low emission delivery options for businesses, including electric vans and cargo cycles. Ensure there are suitably located rapid chargepoints available in rural areas remote from the Highways England network (eg much of Devon), to serve business travel. Public sector spending should favour ultra low emission vehicles, eg in selection of courier services, choice of fleet vehicles and expenses policies.
passenger rail?	Include networks serving the far south west in programmes of electrification.
aviation?	Reduce demand, both by taxing frequent flyers and by expanding and improving rail alternatives.
freight?	Encourage local circular economies, to reduce the need to move goods around.
maritime?	-
other transport?	Taxis are important to older people in Devon, but low margins mean they need help with the capital cost of switching to low emission vehicles.

Local journeys

Q12. What, if any, changes to reduce the greenhouse gases produced by your local transport, would you like to see made?

Local authorities should have both the lead responsibility and the resources to develop an ambitious and inclusive strategy for local transport, including active travel, to achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This should result in overall travel plans which the public can understand and influence. Current planning, for example in the market town and hinterland where we operate, is piecemeal and scattered across public, private and voluntary agencies. Nothing draws together what the predicted or desired future patterns of travel are or who will do what to bring about the sustainable transport that is cited as a high level aim.
The location and layout of new housing must minimize greenhouse gas emissions from transport. New estates currently being built here lack decent pedestrian routes to shops and schools.
Ensure all towns and major villages are connected through frequent, regular bus services covering both day and evening, with safe and comfortable bus shelters. Older passengers need to sit while waiting, yet many Devon bus stops are just a pole in a hedge.
Invest in infrastructure that makes cycling and walking (including wheelchair use) a real option in all settlements (not just major towns as prioritised in Gear Change). This should include gap filling where pavements are missing or narrow. Key cycling links should be prioritised above road construction. An example is the need a commuter standard cycle track alongside the A386 north of Plymouth. Much voluntary effort gone into scoping this, but despite stakeholder support there is no obvious funding source.

Q13. What, if any, examples of good transport initiatives in your local area do you have (with a particular focus on low or zero emission initiatives)?

Pedestrianisation of historic areas of our town centre has made shopping on foot and visiting by cycle more attractive. Tourist coaches are also welcomed, encouraging an alternative to cars for holiday travel.
Sections of NCN27, though mainly a leisure cycle route, provide attractive traffic free links used by local residents.
The Tavistock to Plymouth bus service now runs every 15 minutes (though only weekday daytime), which increased confidence in use.
A neighbouring area has a plan for a community housing development with shared electric cars and bikes powered from on site renewable energy https://www.sdce.org.uk/community-housing.html.

Longer journeys

Q14. What changes would you like to see that will help to reduce the greenhouse gases produced from longer journeys?

The far south west of England is poorly served by rail, and those rail services that are there have only patchy connections to bus and cycle routes. Tavistock residents travelling north or east of Exeter by train have to allow an hour to get through Plymouth or Exeter traffic to a busy car park, or more for a bus connection. We would like to see our station and rail connection back!

Purchasing goods

Q15. What action do you think government should take to reduce the greenhouse gases produced from the:

distribution of goods across the country?	Aim to minimize it by measures which reduce waste, help small businesses selling to local markets stand up to supermarkets, and facilitate community food production.
delivery of goods to shops or residences?	Providers of delivery services should be encouraged to switch to low emission vehicles. Help market towns develop delivery services which link up independent shops with consumers ordering both online and on car-free shopping trips.

Travel choices

Q16. Do you find it:

difficult to make informed travel choices in relation to the emissions produced?

Information to inform travel choices

Q17. What information would you find helpful in making those choices?

Other:
Although there are a variety of apps and calculators available, none appear widely known or used. As a community group advocating for sustainable travel within a particular locality, all of these might be useful for different audiences. It would be helpful to be able to tailor an interface, eg pre-populate with specific bus and train routes.

Final comments

Q19. Any other comments?

We welcome the priorities set in Figure 1, and agree with the minister that “The scale of the challenge demands a step change in both the breadth and scale of ambition and we have a duty to act quickly and decisively to reduce emissions.”
Changes to transport to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have many other benefits. For example:
A decrease in car ownership would reduce the amount of land wasted on parking, even if the number and length of trips remained the same.
Without alternatives, people keep driving when their eyesight or mental co-ordination is no longer at the required standard, posing a safety risk to themselves and others.