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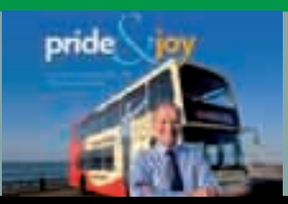

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Thursday 4 November 2010, CBI Conference Centre, London WC1

Confirmed Keynote Speaker: Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Updated proposals for a new High Speed line from London to Birmingham, and how to extend it to Leeds, will be presented by HS2 to the government at the end of this month. A major public consultation on the revised plans will begin early in 2011 with a Hybrid Bill to be laid before Parliament to enable works to start in 2015.

While progress is clearly being sustained on the UK's High Speed agenda there still remain key areas for major debate. Issues for debate include:

- Will the Government re-configure the route to include Heathrow?
- Is a route to Scotland really viable?
- Newly built high speed network versus upgrade of existing classic network?
- Are the environmental costs worth the end results?
- How can we keep construction costs down?
- How can the private sector get involved?

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- **Colin Matthews,** Chief Executive, BAA Airports Limited
- **Prof David Begg,** Publisher, Transport Times
- **Anthony Smith,** Chief Executive, Passenger Focus
- **Jim Steer,** Director, Greengauge 21
- **Paul Plummer,** Director of Planning and Regulation, Network Rail
- **Cllr Valerie Letheren,** Cabinet member for Transport, Buckinghamshire County Council

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Anti-camera rhetoric is inept and dangerous

Ben Webster

Politicians will always play politics – that is what they have been training all their adult lives to do. But there are some issues for which the consequences of deceitful posturing for political gain can be deadly.

Road safety is one of those issues. The coalition government is going to have blood on its hands because of the dangerous game it is playing with speed cameras. The Conservatives are mostly to blame but the Liberal Democrats are guilty by association because they have failed to denounce what is happening.

In order to deflect attention from its £38m cut in the road safety budget, the coalition criticised the use of speed cameras and suggested that there were too many of them.

Within days of taking office, the coalition announced it would fund no more cameras. This was disingenuous because it is local authorities and police which decide whether to deploy cameras.

But the coalition's anti-camera rhetoric gave local politicians who dislike cameras the excuse they were waiting for. They could present the reduction in camera enforcement as a sensible money-saving measure that would have no adverse consequences.

Oxfordshire has already switched off its 72 fixed cameras and other local authorities are considering doing likewise. Headlines reporting the end of cameras have given drivers the impression that they stand less chance of being caught. They are therefore more likely to ignore the limit where it most dangerous to do so: restrictions imposed by the previous government ensured that almost all cameras were located at sites with a history of serious crashes.

The rapid reduction in road deaths in the past three years is likely to be arrested as a consequence of the coalition's attack on speed cameras. We may even see deaths rise for the first time since 2003.

The question everyone in the camera debate should address is whether or nor cameras save lives. Some people argue that cameras are justified simply because they catch people breaking the law. However, I agree with the anti-speed camera lobby that, given finite resources, it makes no sense to spend money enforcing laws just for their own sake.

> **Habitual speeders slowly got the message, especially when they found their insurance premiums soaring**

Speed cameras cut fuel consumption per mile, reduce noise pollution and make roads more appealing to cyclists and walkers. But given the urgent need to cut public spending, none of these benign side-effects is enough to justify paying for cameras.

Investment in camera enforcement can only be justified if it reduces the number of crashes and saves lives.

The anti speed camera lobby used to have one strong argument in its favour: there was little improvement in the road death rate in the decade after 1992, when cameras began to be introduced.

But this argument ignored how deeply-ingrained speeding used to be in our driving culture. Since the dawn of the automobile, drivers have assumed the right to determine how fast they drive, believing themselves better judges of what is a safe speed than any number of road engineers.

My own partner, who is a police officer and lectures me on the wisdom of the law, only began to change her driving habits two years ago when she found herself on nine penalty points, just one flash away from an automatic six-month ban.

Millions of drivers failed to change their attitude after being caught for the first or second time. But the habitual speeders slowly got the message, especially when they found their insurance premiums soaring. The proportion of drivers observing the 30mph limit rose above 50% for the first time in 2008, as camera deployment reached its peak.

Of course improvements in crashworthiness have played a part in the fall in road deaths, but those improvements have been incremental over many years. I would argue that the main reason why 1300 fewer people died on our roads last year than in 2003 is that we have learnt to respect the rules of the road and to be less arrogant while driving.

The coalition suggests that cameras are catching good drivers who pose no particular risk to other road users. Yet the evidence shows the opposite: a study by Napier University found that drivers caught by speed cameras were twice as likely to have had a crash. Cameras are catching dangerous drivers.

The coalition is attempting to pander to what it believes is the anti-camera prejudice of Middle England. But its intervention may turn out to have been politically inept as well as morally corrupt. The AA's Populus polls consistently show that 70% of its members support cameras. How ironic that an organisation founded to help drivers avoid being caught speeding should have become a camera advocate.

Let us hope that Philip Hammond, the transport secretary, and Mike Penning, road safety minister, recognise the dreadful impact of their cheap political stunt before the hundreds of extra coffins become thousands.

Ben Webster is environment editor of *The Times*.

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Camera funding cuts unleash widespread protests

Cuts in government funding for road safety and in particular for speed cameras has triggered a storm of protest.

Following Transport Secretary Philip Hammond's early statement about "ending the war on the motorist" road safety minister Mike Penning called on highway authorities and police forces across the country to rethink their strategies. He announced that the Government would scrap the capital element of the Road Safety Grant which he said had been "closely associated with paying for new speed cameras".

In the most high-profile intervention, Oxfordshire County Council then cut £600,000 from Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnerships budget, leading to Oxfordshire's cameras being switched off last month.

Opposition to the moves was led by the RAC Foundation and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

In an unusually outspoken response Mick Giannasi, Chief Constable of Gwent Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers' lead on roads policing, writes in *TT*: "It is obvious that a reduction in the number of safety cameras on our roads, without some other form of enforcement, will lead to an increase in deaths and casualties."

RoSPA co-ordinated a joint communiqué signed by the AA, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, cycling organisation CTC, Road Safety GB and four other road safety organisations.

The statement said: "We the undersigned agree that: speed cameras help to save lives – an estimated 100 lives a year in the UK. Lives are saved by reducing speeding. Speeding significantly increases the risk of an accident happening, and also increases the severity of injuries in an accident.

"Switching off cameras systematically would be close to creating a void in law enforcement on the road."

It added: "While public spending needs to be cut, cuts must be justified by evidence. Cameras pay for themselves and currently make an important contribution to achieving compliance with the speed limit."

Meanwhile the latest *Transport Times* senior executive panel survey found that 62% were in favour of cameras with only 14% opposed.

In a statement Oxfordshire said: "Councils up and down the UK have had their Road Safety Grant cut. Oxfordshire is just one of those councils. We believe that this funding will be cut yet again in future years.

"In that knowledge, having received a £300,000 cut in funding this year we have passed on a £600,000 cut and this will help us preserve many of our other services – in the sphere of highways, social care, and other areas."

Switching off cameras will create "a void in law enforcement"

Further analysis and opinion: pages 6 and 7

Transport executives back cameras – *TT* survey

The majority (62%) of respondents to the latest Accent/*Transport Times* Senior Executive Panel Survey were in favour of speed cameras, with 14% opposed to their use.

A majority (again 62%) also consider that there is a widespread disregard for speed limits by drivers, and a third of all those surveyed agree that this is a serious road safety problem.

86% agreed that speed cameras make drivers more likely to observe the speed limit and 62% supported the view that they increase drivers' awareness of the importance of keeping to the speed limit. One in three thought speed cameras were a cynical ploy to penalise motorists while 57% of respondents strongly disagreed with the notion.

When it came to the Government's policy to cut back funding for speed cameras the panel was evenly split with 29% in favour, 33% against and 38% undecided. This contrasted with the response when the panel was asked whether the government should cut funding for road safety in general, with which 71% disagreed, none agreed and 27% were undecided.

Of those who backed cuts to speed cameras, 83% agreed that funds should be directed to other road safety measures. These included default 20mph speed limits in built-up areas, more police patrols and additional traffic calming measures.

One respondent noted that increased road safety education has a key role to play.

Rob Sheldon, MD of Accent, which co-sponsors of the research programme, commented: "There has been much debate on the use of speed cameras in improving road safety in recent months. This research is extremely valuable in giving an indication of what transport executives feel the role of speed cameras will be in road safety measures going forward.

"Ministers should pay particular attention to these opinions as our panel is very close to high-level decision-making on a day to day basis."

If you are a senior executive working in the transport industry and would like to be part of this bi-monthly poll on 'hot topics' in transportation please contact Alison Lawrence (Alison.Lawrence@accent-mr.com). Each bi-monthly survey will take no more than five minutes to complete and all answers will be treated in complete confidence unless you give your permission for us to quote you.

Cameras are instruments of peace, not war

For some, speed cameras epitomise the 'war on the motorist' but **Richard Allsop** sees them as a benign influence, helping us all to come home safely from our daily battle with the traffic

Richard Allsop: "It is ironic that all this is being threatened by a short-term cut in road safety funding intended to help to reduce the deficit"

Speed gets people and goods there sooner, but at great cost, especially in death, injury and damage in collisions, and in carbon dioxide.

Prevailing speeds stem from the choices drivers and motorcyclists make on each stretch of road as they find it. As drivers we gain immediately from higher speed through earlier arrival, and possibly the pleasure of going faster.

We bear some of the cost ourselves (mainly increased running costs and risk), but we tend to underperceive these costs. And we do not ourselves bear any of the human costs to others of collisions, or much of the resulting damage to the environment. For these reasons, it is inherent in the road traffic system that all of us tend to go faster than is good for ourselves or society.

It would thus be wrong for each of us to be free to choose how fast to drive. Responsible government of any party rightly seeks to manage speed, usually to moderate it. This doesn't just mean reining in a less responsible minority of blatant speeders; it requires all of us who drive to do our bit – even if we are tempted to think of ourselves as very responsible citizens. We are all liable to go faster than is appropriate to the circumstances, and the ultimate aim of speed management is to achieve appropriate speeds by all drivers and motorcyclists everywhere.

There are many ways of adapting the roads, the vehicles and ourselves to help achieve appropriate speeds – but setting speed limits is an important tool for speed management, and all roads in Britain have been subject to limits since 1965. And we all need the discipline of enforcement to help us to keep the limits in mind and try to comply with them.

The Traffic Law Review, reporting in 1988, set out the principle that enforcement should be proportionate. It should bear hard upon blatantly irresponsible offenders, while responding to occasional lapses by basically law-abiding drivers with penalties they can see as sharp but justified reminders to keep their driving up to the mark.

The same report recommended introducing speed cameras because the objective of reducing death and injury "amply justifies the police making use of the best available means within the law to deter and detect offenders [including] using the latest technology… [targeted] as precisely as possible on those most likely to be in breach of the law".

Resulting penalty points for occasional lapses have not, as some feared, led to numerous disqualifications for reaching 12 points, and few people have reservations about cameras bearing hard upon blatant speeders. Indeed, a consultative review of traffic penalties in 2002 recommended higher penalties than the current three points and £60 fine for drivers that cameras detect exceeding the limit substantially. This still awaits implementation, but meanwhile the police have other ways of being tougher on such drivers.

> **It is inherent in the road traffic system that all of us tend to go faster than is good for ourselves or society**

AA surveys show that cameras have gained acceptance by 70% of motorists. They have helped bring average speeds in free-flowing traffic on 30mph roads below 30mph and reduce the percentage of drivers exceeding the limit from 72% to less than 50%, and those mostly only by a small margin. They have freed drivers who want to keep below 30mph from a lot of intimidation from behind, and reduced anxiety of pedestrians and parents about risk from speeding vehicles.

On rural roads, fixed cameras have reduced speeds at high-risk sites, as average speed cameras are beginning to do over whole hazardous stretches.

In all these ways, cameras have helped reduce the numbers killed on our roads by more than 40% in the 15 years since their use began, and are helping to bring peace to our roads and make them among the safest in the world. They play similar parts in road safety in France and the Netherlands.

And for good measure their costs are covered by the fixed penalties paid by those detected exceeding speed limits by more than the customary margins, with a modest surplus (not a massive stealth tax) for the Exchequer. So it is ironic that all this is being threatened by a short-term cut in road safety funding intended to help to reduce the deficit.

All concerned for road safety need to work and hope for wiser counsels to prevail as longer-term decisions about transport finance and road safety are made this autumn – so that cameras can resume in full their evolving and self-funding role helping to cut casualties and bring peace to our roads.

Richard Allsop is emeritus professor of transport studies at University College London and a director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety and of the European Travel Safety Council. He has been active in road safety research and policy for over 45 years.

Policy should be based on evidence

Forget fox hunting – the one issue which truly polarises public opinion is speed cameras: a money-making racket to some; to many, blighted by "racing" drivers, a godsend. Unfortunately the passion seems to have infected ministers' offices in Marsham Street where the eradication of cameras is seemingly regarded first and foremost as evidence the coalition Government is "ending the war on motorists".

Proving speed cameras work – or otherwise – is not a straightforward activity and this does nothing to temper suspicion on either side of the divide. When concepts like "regression to the mean" are deployed alongside graphs appearing at first sight to suggest cameras not only fail to dent the casualty rate but actually increase it, clearly there will be no easy end to the dispute. The RAC Foundation has commissioned work to scrutinise the existing evidence, though for the reasons mentioned it would be unsurprising if the results failed to satisfy both the pros and the antis.

Even if cameras are deemed to make no meaningful difference to death and injury that raises two questions: what is the alternative? And do we care about speed at all?

The answer to the first is: very little. Cash-strapped constabularies will not fill the enforcement gap, so much will depend on drivers' desire to observe speed limits. As for the second question: surely we must care? Speed was named as a contributory factor in 609 fatal accidents in 2008. But what is not often discussed is the effect of speed on the severity of an accident once it is in train, whether or not speed was a factor. Hitting a tree at 70mph is patently more perilous than striking it at 20mph.

One Oxfordshire village is reportedly digging deep to "buy" a camera turned off after the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership saw its budget slashed. Though laudable in principle this must be unacceptable in practice.

A meaningful road safety policy should be formulated on the basis of evidence, not politics, and funded by the Town Hall, not by a whip- round at the local pub.

Professor Stephen Glaister is director of the RAC Foundation for Motoring

Hollow rhetoric of a phoney war

Coverage of Philip Hammond's comments about "ending the war on the motorist" has tended to focus on speed cameras. But the assertion that there is a "war on the motorist" goes much wider than speed – it has encompassed taxation, pricing, parking standards and even the need to replace pedestrian crossings with bridges or subways. Some of the more extreme motoring groups have championed scepticism about climate change, and this has drifted via the motoring pages into the mainstream media.

All this ignores a basic reality – it's not physically possible to provide enough roads and parking spaces for everyone to drive where they like, when they like, at the speed they like, and park where they like, with zero charges or taxes. And even if it were possible, it would not be desirable for motorists themselves, let alone on economic, social, health or environmental grounds.

This reality is denied by some of the motoring groups. In fact, not only do some of them oppose taxes and charges (especially road pricing), they want state subsidies for road-building to be increased. The TaxPayers' Alliance, which has joined forces with the Drivers' Alliance, appears now to be in the interesting position of opposing all public spending except on road building. Groups like these seem uninterested in arguments that major road building involves state-sponsored compulsory purchase of private property or in evidence that road-building often results in journey times for drivers lengthening, that the forecasts underpinning roads are often wrong, or that costs of projects have escalated.

Using the rhetoric about "the war on the motorist" will embolden the people who use it, and their viewpoint. Declaring an end to the war may have seemed tactically clever – but it could come back to haunt the Government if and when it finds it actually needs to take action to tackle congestion, casualties, pollution and intrusion from traffic.

Stephen Joseph is executive director of the Campaign for Better Transport.

Removing cameras will cost lives

There has been much debate over the past month on the effectiveness and use of speed cameras with strong views both in support of them and against them. The vocal minority welcome their demise. But will they still welcome it if a loved one is killed by a speeding driver?

Safety cameras are an effective way of making drivers reduce their speed and drive more safely while penalising those who don't. There is clear evidence that speed cameras help to reduce deaths and injuries on our roads. Since their introduction in 2002 the number of deaths of our roads has dropped by more than 1200 and casualties have dropped by more than 110,000. That's a huge reduction and saving, not just in human life, but also in costs to the country. And while that reduction can be attributed to a whole range of road safety initiatives, the cornerstone of that success is without doubt safety cameras.

As a result of Government funding cuts the future sustainability of the system is now at risk, with local authorities decommissioning safety cameras at an alarming rate. It is obvious that a reduction in the number of safety cameras on our roads, without some other form of enforcement, will lead to an increase in deaths and casualties.

We need decisive action to prevent the demise of the system while other options are considered.

We also need balanced decision-making by local authorities, and government intervention to provide clarity and to avoid pre-emptive action.

Keeping people safe on our roads requires a concerted campaign, based on a variety of tactics to prevent irresponsible people from causing death and injury. Safety cameras are a vital part of that campaign. We need to look at the evidence and ask if a knee-jerk reaction here is genuinely going to save money. Or is it just going to cost lives?

Mick Giannasi is chief constable of Gwent Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers' lead on roads policing

Protect spending to support growth says CILT

The Government's comprehensive spending review should prioritise spending that supports economic growth or reduces congestion, according to a survey by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Maintaining and making the best use of existing infrastructure is seen as a higher priority than building new capacity – with the exception of the new high speed rail network, for which there was wide support.

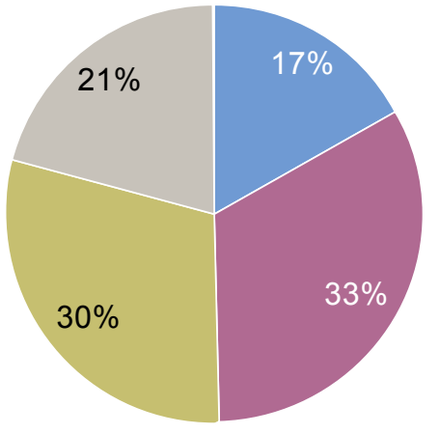
The online poll of over 1,200 CILT members was designed to inform and shape CILT's contribution to the spending review.

Asked which areas of spending should be protected as a priority, 75% of respondents chose "supporting economic growth", echoing the message *Transport Times* has campaigned on since last autumn. Reducing congestion is second, backed by 57%, with urban/regional generation third, on 42%, followed by a reduction in carbon emissions, chosen by 49%.

Areas seen as high priority for cutting spending were socially inclusive services (54%), rural accessibility (46%), health and safety (44%) and increasing capacity (44%).

Asked about specific preferences for transport spending, rail capacity on the conventional network was most highly rated (by 33%) followed by road maintenance (31%) and smarter choices (29%).

> **"The one area where there was enthusiasm for spending on new capacity was high speed rail"**



Accelerate plans
Continue existing plans
Delay progress
Suspend plans

Question: Thinking about the high-speed rail network (HS2) and in view of the current economic circumstances, should the Government accelerate or delay its plans?

New motorways and subsidies to both bus and rail fares were among the lowest priorities. Investment in rail capacity was favoured by 61% compared with 24% in favour of new road capacity.

Over three-quarters (77%) thought spending on smarter choices should be increased or maintained at current levels.

The one area where there was enthusiasm for spending on new capacity was high speed rail. One in 20 made it their top priority. 50% thought the Government should continue with or accelerate the existing HS2 plans; 30% thought the current timetable should be delayed, while only 21% thought plans should be suspended.

Over half supported spending to reduce carbon emissions from transport, with 55% in favour of maintaining or increasing government spending on this. Of this group, 77% favoured green taxes to raise money and create incentives to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Asked about options for raising additional funds from the transport sector, seven out of 10 members identified some form of road charging – on existing roads, in uban areas or on new capacity – among their top three preferences. Nearly a half wanted to see the air transport sector targeted, either through a "per plane" tax (33%) or increasing air passenger duty. Only 19% wanted to see asset sales to raise money.

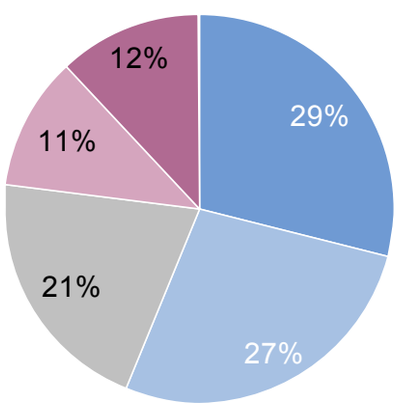
There was also support for users paying a higher proportion of transport costs – 39% favoured reducing "concessions such as travel by senior citizens". Only 8% put "bus fare subsidies" as one of their top three spending preferences, the same proportion as for rail fare subsidies.

Sir Moir Lockhead, CILT president, said: "Members firmly support spending in the context of supporting economic growth – the message is, focus on where we can spend well, and get the networks we have now running properly."

CILT members work in all areas and modes of transport including the bus, rail and aviation sectors, supply chain, transport planning and active travel. This is the first time the institute has conducted a survey such as this. CILT chief executive Steve Agg said: "Our members are facing transport and logistical challenges at the front line day after day, which makes this research very relevant."

Polling was carried out in July.

Question: Should the Government increase or decrease its spending on "smarter choices"?



Substantially increase
Marginally increase
Maintain at current level
Marginally reduce
Substantially reduce

Scotland puts road user charging back on the agenda

Road user charging, workplace parking levies and stringent restrictions on street parking are among options being considered by ministers to meet Scotland's climate change targets.

The details appear in a discussion document leaked to the Herald newspaper as possible ways to contribute to Scotland's target of a 42% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020.

The report accepts many of the proposals would be unpopular.

It follows the recent report by the Independent Budget Review panel which also suggested consideration of road user charging as a way of raising additional funding for transport projects to the Scottish Government.

The climate change reports contains 30 measures across several policy areas.

For transport its proposals include strict enforcement of the 70mph limit on motorways and a reduction of the limit to 60mph on all trunk roads. Active traffic management with variable speed limits and average speed enforcement should be used more widely, though the use of cameras to reduce emissions is less likely to be supported than their use to improve road safety, the report suggests.

It suggests a 50% increase in parking charges, and that all on-street parking should be controlled by pay and display machines or residents' permits by 2017.

The should be a £300 annual levy on all parking spaces for employers with 10 or more staff – which it admits is unlikely to be popular with employers.

A nationwide road pricing scheme would make motorists pay according to the emissions their cars produce. It would average at 5p/km, on top of existing fuel taxes.

There are also proposal for improving bus and rail facilities, shifting freight from road to rail, and improving facilities for cyclists and walkers. The aim would be that 20% of all trips would be made by bike.

The proposals were attacked by the motoring lobby but defended by environmentalists.

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "We are working with partners across Scotland to deliver our world-leading climate change measures. We are engaging constructively with a broad range of environmental groups, companies, trade unions and business organisations as well as all parties in Parliament. The discussion papers ensure a full and open discussion and have been made available as part of that engagement to illustrate a range of options that could potentially cut carbon. The papers do not reflect Government policy."

The report of the Independent Budget Review said: "Transport is a key area where systems can be designed differently to better manage demand, supplement investment resources and reduce, or at least delay, the need for new capital expenditure."

Quoting supporting evidence from the Scottish CBI and sustainable transport group Transform Scotland, it concludes: "the panel suggests that the Scottish Government should consider the feasibility of adopting road user charging as a means to both better managing the use of existing transport networks and financing improvements to those networks."

Fair transport pricing has a crucial role

Ferhan Khan

The Scottish Government's recently-published Independent Budget Review came up with a strong, if little-noticed, recommendation that the Government should implement road user charging as a part of its austerity package.

Almost all recent political discussion of transport expenditure has concentrated on what transport expenditure could be cut in order to balance the books. But there has been little or no attention paid to what finances could be raised instead – allowing current levels of transport spending to be maintained.

While this may sound an unpalatable message to some, and especially in the midst of an economic recession, fair transport pricing will also have to play a crucial role in ensuring that the Scottish Government meets the targets set in its Climate Change Act. At the moment, the transport sector remains the main obstacle to the national climate targets being met, and only radical action on this front will allow the government to meet its legal obligations.

The RAC Foundation recently made a welcome reaffirmation of its commitment to road user charging. We would only dispute its reported assertion that road pricing is "inevitable", given the hostility that the concept provokes in politicians who would otherwise claim to found their arguments in sound economics.

Our current system, by which road users are able to access any part of the road network for the same price (apart from examples such as the M6 Toll or central London), is deeply inefficient. When a particular product or service is in high demand it can expect to fetch a higher price on the market. Why then is it deemed acceptable to pay for road space in built up areas with time, patience, anger and frustration?

Having a fairer system where roads are priced according to demand will have a positive impact on our economy, including a tempering of congestion where it's experienced most, and bringing in much-needed revenue which could be hypothecated for other transport requirements such as augmenting our public transport infrastructure. Transport is the principal sector where greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Investment in more sustainable transport modes would not only contribute to achieving climate change objectives, it would also help prepare us for the challenge of oil depletion and encourage the adoption of a more sustainable lifestyle, where the need for travelling is reduced and the choice of sustainable transport over the private car is promoted.

Following the defeats of congestion charge proposals for Edinburgh (in 2005) and Manchester (in 2008), the appetite for road pricing has currently dimmed. But this has not stopped progress across the continent.

Stockholm has followed London in introducing such a scheme, while Prague and Budapest continue to explore following suit. On a Europe-wide scale, the European Commission is working on the revision to the EU's Eurovignette road charging rules. A recent report issued by Brussels-based association Transport & Environment concluded that a €0.15/km charge would reduce vehicle kilometres by 15%.

While the proposals of the past decade have been mainly framed in concerns over congestion, it is surely the case that future proposals will increasingly be related to legal requirements on climate change and air pollution. It is possible that Milan's Ecopass scheme, which charges linked to vehicle emissions, may be closer to the model followed in future years.

The Independent Budget Review's recommendation to implement road user charging re-opens the debate on this essential measure. It is now essential that the Scottish Government looks at this seriously in the context of its promised review of the National Transport Strategy. Without fair transport pricing, it is difficult to see how Scotland's emissions targets can be met.

Ferhan Khan is a campaigner with Transform Scotland

Green group calls for an end to aviation tax relief

There is no tax on aviation fuel or VAT on aircraft equipment

Aviation is under-taxed compared with road transport and the Government should raise taxes to end this discrepancy, according to a new report from an environmental group.

The Green Alliance, working with the Policy Studies Institute, estimates that tax exemptions for the aviation industry are worth £10bn annually. It calls on the Government to reform aviation taxation at the same time as increasing it, to replace air passenger duty with a tax on each flight, the "per plane tax".

The study builds on the work of the Green Fiscal Commission, which reported earlier this year on three years of work into the effect of a "green tax shift" in the UK.

The Green Alliance report says the Government could raise £23bn a year by 2013, enough to reduce employee National Insurance contributions by 0.5%. If ultimately taxation were raised to the equivalent of road fuel duty and VAT, NI contributions could be reduced by 1.5%

Such a move would be in line with the government's commitment to increase revenue from green taxation. The Alliance says: "An increase in aviation taxation should be the first in a series of tax changes that enable less revenue to be raised from things in society we want to encourage, like job creation and innovation, by placing a fair price on pollution and taxing things we want to reduce, like fossil fuel use."

It says aviation has historically been under-taxed compared to other transport modes. The Treasury estimates that if aviation fuel were taxed at an equivalent rate to road fuel, the sector would contribute an extra £65bn a year to the Exchequer. Air tickets and the purchase of aircraft equipment are also currently exempt from VAT. The Transport Select Committee calculated that removing this exemption would raise another £23bn annually.

The tax paid on fuel for a journey by car from London to Newquay is around £25 on average, whereas for a flight each passenger pays air passenger duty of £11. The flight would on average produce two to three times as much carbon dioxide per passenger.

The alliance argues that replacing air passenger duty with a tax on each plane would create a stronger incentive for airlines to be efficient and maximise the number of passengers on each flight.

Because the per plane tax would apply equally to all airlines there is no reason why airlines should not pass the full cost on to passengers, the Alliance argues. If the Government chose to raise an additional £2.5bn from flights, it estimates the additional tax on a London-New York economy flight would be £50-60, rising to £200-300 for business or first class tickets.

The paper says technical issues remain to be resolved but recommends the Government should introduce a per plane tax by April next year.

Baker speeds up national smartcard plans

Transport minister Norman Baker has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to a nationwide travel smartcard and has asked Department for Transport officials to accelerate plans to introduce it.

In an interview with the *Sunday Express* he said he wanted the card to be operational within "a few years" rather than the original target of 2020.

The card, along the lines of London's Oyster card, would ultimately be accepted on all forms of public transport but would be phased in, with buses as the first priority. Mr Baker said there may be complications about ensuring acceptance on trains, partly because of the cost of long-distance train tickets, but the ideal goal was that the card would be accepted by train operators as well. It could be topped up at shops, stations, online or by phone.

Mr Baker believed that having a single card could revolutionise people's attitudes to public transport, giving them a "psychological incentive and more confidence to make journeys". "The aim is that you get one smartcard ticket which you can use whether you are in Bristol on the bus, on the Tube in London or in Newcastle on the Metro."

It is expected that most of the cost of introducing the technology would be borne by bus and rail operators. It is estimated that the scheme could save £2bn through lower overheads and faster journey times.

A DfT spokesperson said: "The government is considering a range of new ideas to modernise our transport system and make it greener and more efficient. The secretary of state will set out final proposals on these areas in due course.

"Smartcard technology can play a key role in improving the passenger experience by making it easier and quicker to buy and use tickets. That is why we are working with bus and train operators to introduce this technology across the country."

West Midlands passenger transport executive Centro is undertaking trials of a £20m smartcard scheme and has said that it will be fully introduced across the region on buses, trains and trams by next summer.

David Begg's MINISTER WATCH

Transport Times publisher **David Begg** on what's going on around Whitehall

The summer recess is a good time to catch up on political biographies. But if you were hoping to gain a deeper insight into the formulation of transport policy at Whitehall from the biographies by Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson you will be disappointed. Transport is an afterthought.

In Tony Blair's *A Journey* he does devote three pages to the fuel duty protests in 1999 and the key conclusion he draws is that it is yet another example of the dangers for government of becoming too detached from middle England. He was very angry with the soft line the police took with the lorry drivers who were blocking the refineries.

There is one other mention of transport in his book and it's his frustration with rail privatisation following the Hatfield rail crash, and how he frequently had to "bang the table" to get train operating companies and Railtrack into line.

The best insight into transport is in Andrew Rawnsley's book *The End of the Party* which is one of the most in depth and accurate analyses of New Labour's track record in Government. He rightly observes that Blair and Brown carved out between themselves who took ownership of varying policies. Blair controlled foreign policy, law and order and education, while Brown had both hands on the economy, welfare and international development. While they "fought over health, neither of them were interested in transport".

Former health minister and arch-Blairite Alan Milburn, writing in *The Sunday Times*, called for the widespread use of road tolls and congestion charging. He called for Labour to be bold and radical in opposition and to privatise the motorway network. He made the point that co-payment, the use of charges and fees, is much more prevalent in Scandinavia, where 3% of government income comes from this source. That is 10 times as much as in the UK.

However, he got it wrong in his article by claiming that the Dutch are planning to go even further in introducing congestion charging, when in fact they have once again bottled proposals to make road pricing widespread.

Mr Milburn is on strong ground when he claims in the same article that "it is surely hard to justify freezing benefits for the worst-off while free pensioner bus passes are handed out to the better-off. Simply limiting free bus travel to local, rather than national, travel would save about a quarter of the £1bn cost of the scheme. Means testing would save another quarter."

Music to *TT*'s ears! Pity that Phillip Hammond's sensible proposals to make savings here were rejected by Number 10.

The decision by Oxfordshire County Council to remove all its speed cameras has been met with jubilation in the press. DfT has been quoted as saying that it "unwittingly" misled the public by stating on its website that cameras reduced serious injuries by 40% when in fact the figure was half this.

In order to pander to the slogan of "ending the war on motorists" our politicians are playing fast and loose with people's lives. A road accident is still the most likely cause of death for our children and we are removing a safety measure which has reduced serious injury by 22%! Why is there not an outcry?

Can you imagine the reaction from the public if politicians were to make it more likely for our children to be abducted or were removing measures which were successful in tackling knife crime?

The most important task any politician with responsibility for transport has is to reduce the carnage on the roads. The price of short-term popularity in the tabloid press will be paid by victims of preventable road accidents. While the decision to continue with speed cameras will be made at local level, ministers need to be careful of the drumbeat they are sending out.

Tony Blair: A Journey that did not entail an interest in transport

> **Blair had to bang the table to get train operators and Railtrack into line**

A regional perspective is important: don't lose it

The twin processes of replacing regional development agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships and the McNulty review of rail cost-effectiveness need to keep the needs of the wider economy in mind

The rush to scrap the regional development agencies (RDAs) leaves great uncertainties over the way decisions on transport investment are to be taken. Nobody knows what will happen to the mechanism for regional funding allocations that the RDAs were managing.

While legally the RDAs will still exist into 2011, the reality is that they are already in rapid close-down mode. We don't yet have even a White Paper on their replacements, but work has proceeded at a hectic pace through the summer to bring together adjoining local authorities to form the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that will be given legal powers in due course.

If this carries a risk of a hiatus in decision-making it will no doubt suit budget-hawks, but not those of us who sense that investment in transport infrastructure is needed across widely-drawn geographic areas if the aim is a competitive and growing economy.

The landscape for transport planning and oversight is changing fast. The LEPs are set to assume significant responsibilities for transport issues, working as partnerships between local authorities and local businesses.

A worry for the DfT is that it looks likely there will be too many LEPs to devolve prioritisation of investment. Early thoughts that they should comprise at least two top-level local authorities are being overtaken in some cases by the realities of local political rivalries.

But real local economies reflect journey-to-work areas, not pre-existing local authority boundaries. LEP boundaries need to be drawn accordingly.

Many policies and investment choices act at the wider-city region and sub-regional level. Old city boundaries have been swamped by ever-extending commuter catchments. The PTEs and ITAs will have to be re-mapped to suit the new order. That could help to create the necessary machinery for cross-LEP coordination, as it appears will be needed in the West Midlands, for instance.

Elsewhere, some pan-LEP arrangements are going to be needed, otherwise efficient transport initiatives that only make sense across the city-regions (the Northern Hub at Manchester, for example) will never happen, and the DfT will have to re-centralise all funding decisions.

This is not the only area of current uncertainty. The bus sector understandably frets over its grant and subsidy arrangements, and TfL is facing up to a need for a massive budget cut.

> **If you then ask the DfT and ORR for advice on rail, will you get solutions that involve clipping their own wings?**

But an even greater cloud hovers above the careful architecture of the five-year settlement for rail funding. This was designed when the imperative was to ensure that ministerial ambitions and Treasury funding were aligned. Now the need is for big savings. Will the McNulty review find a way to get some cost savings out of the rail sector? Is it inevitable that to do so will require major reorganisation?

If that's the route we're going down, prepare for an even lengthier hiatus in decision-making and investment on rail: recall the 1,064 days between 1992 and 1997 while BR's privatisation proceeded, during which no rolling stock orders were placed.

Unless the government has a very clear agenda for rail, it will get conflicting advice (laced currently with a dubious certainty that it's all Network Rail's fault). It may know what it wants in the short term – a lower cost base – but what thereafter? And if you then ask the DfT and ORR, will you get solutions that involve clipping their own wings?

The premise "today's railway is just too damned expensive" may well be true, but it's not enough to set a clearly better way forward.

The secretary of state should look at the recent Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport poll which addressed the thorny question of where to prioritise scarce public expenditure. Remember that half the CILT membership is in freight and logistics, and that it covers the bus industry, aviation and ports as well as rail. Their answer? The main thing to protect is investment in expanding rail capacity. More important even than essential road maintenance.

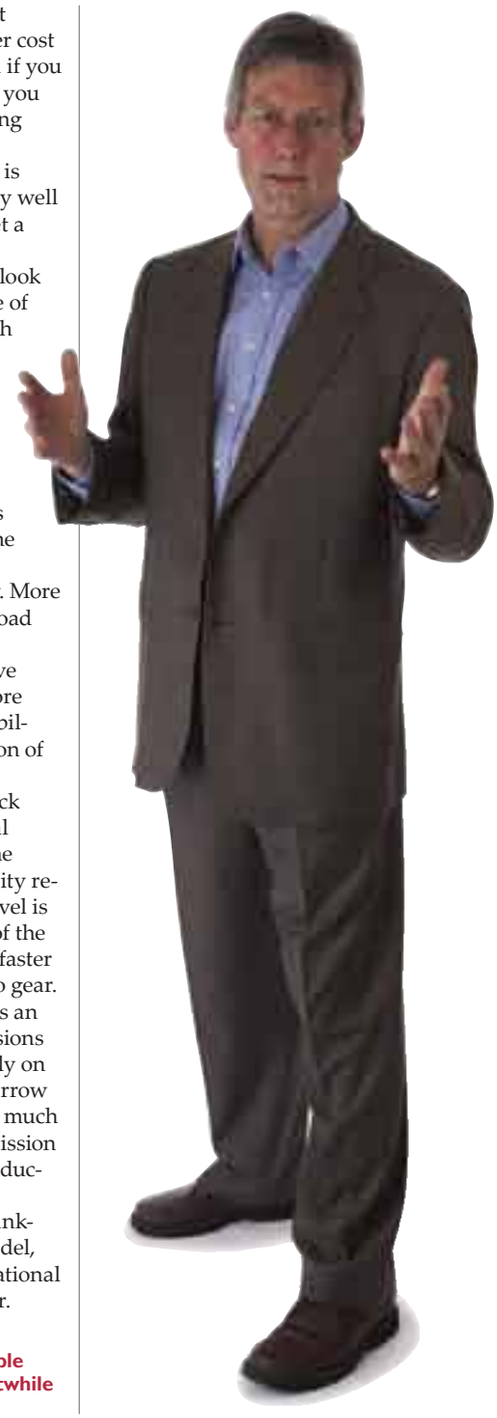
So framing the policy objective around needing to fashion a more cost-effective *expanded* rail capability starts to sound like a direction of travel.

There is an important link back to what's happening at the Local Enterprise Partnership level. The investment needed in rail capacity reflects the fact that passenger travel is still growing, despite the state of the economy, and will surely grow faster once the economy gets back into gear.

But a growing economy needs an efficient transport system. Decisions on rail should not be based solely on the wisdom contained in the narrow confines of the rail sector alone: much better to engage with a wider mission of economic recovery, carbon reduction and social equity.

Add a dose of partnership thinking into the efficient growth model, please, and let's get the organisational uncertainties over in short order.

Jim Steer is a director of Steer Davies Gleave and was responsible for strategic planning at the erstwhile Strategic Rail Authority.



Minister: it's time to back fine words with actions

In an open letter to Norman Baker, minister for cycling, walking, buses, and alternatives to travel, our columnist warns that the demise of Cycling England will have wide repercussions

Dear Norman,

It has been remiss of me not to write before now to congratulate you on your new post.

It is gratifying to see a Liberal Democrat being given key responsibilities in the Department for Transport, especially as you have always been a supporter of various sensible measures such as rail line reopenings, cutting back on road spending, lower rail fares and encouraging cycling and walking.

But Norman, I am a bit worried. It seems that things are happening on your watch that seem to go against policies you have previously supported.

My big beef is cycling which is, of course, a key part of your brief and I will focus on that.

I declare an interest here. I have been on the board of Cycling England, which tries to get more people cycling, since its creation five years ago and I am a lifelong cyclist for both work and pleasure.

But this is surely something you support since the coalition document says "We will support sustainable transport initiatives including the promotion of cycling and walking".

Cycling England battled away in the dark days of Alistair Darling's tenure in the Department for Transport with a budget of just £5m annually for all its work. Then Douglas Alexander doubled it, and Ruth Kelly upped it to £60m, almost serious money.

As a result, a replacement for the virtually defunct Cycle Proficiency scheme, Bikeability, has been created with the aim of offering every primary school child the opportunity to learn to ride safely. Ways to boost cycling have been funded in 18 cycling demonstration towns and early results show that coordinated measures to boost cycling through a combination of education, engineering and inspiration can succeed in getting more bums on saddles.

There's lots of other bits and pieces too, such as funding of Safe Routes to Schools and of initiatives to get train operators to be more cycle-friendly.

Now all that is under threat. Cycling England faces the axe for the crime of being a quango –when it could quite easily not be one – and supposedly there will instead be some nebulous green travel fund.

Details are unclear but the implication is not. Without the direction of an efficient and well-thought out body like Cycling England all these initiatives are under threat. This is not a personal plea, so it could quite easily have a different structure, but ring-fenced funds are essential.

> **Giving "freedom" to local authorities with less money and no precise remit to spend it on cycling will result in more kids failing to learn to ride**

And what have you done so far Norman? By all accounts sat on your hands, and hidden behind your civil servants making no comment on the future of cycle funding.

Now don't start blustering that cycling will be safe without Cycling England or a properly-funded successor body. It won't. The new fund is not due to start till 2012 anyway, and Cycling England's money runs out in 2011.

Giving "freedom" to local authorities with less money and no precise remit to spend it on cycling will result in more kids failing to learn to ride. Many will be unhealthier and fatter and our roads will be clogged with more parents driving their kids around everywhere. Make no mistake – your decision will affect real lives.

So Norman, ask yourself this. What is Norman Baker for? Or more precisely, what is the point of you being in the Department for Transport? Are you a fig-leaf for the most reactionary policies to come out of the Marsham Street since the days of Nicholas Ridley and his obsession with owner-driver buses?

Look how your boss, Philip Hammond, has cut the road safety budget and done away with speed camera funding, in moves that smack of the most ghastly kneejerk populism, and counter to all serious evidence.

If you are not going to attempt to save the work that Cycling England has being doing, and are going to hide behind this vague general fund which is clearly going to result in far less encouragement for cycling, you really have to ask yourself why you are bothering.

No doubt the trappings of office are great fun, but unless you are prepared to stand up for what you believe in, chuck it in, Norman. Or battle away hard for it behind the scenes and prepare to stand up and be counted. Show us, in essence, that you are not simply a collaborator.

Yours very anxiously,

Christian Wolmar

Christian Wolmar's new book, *Engines of War*, will be launched with a lecture at the German Gymnasium, St Pancras, on the evening of Tuesday September 28th at a charity event in aid of the Railway Children. For tickets, which are £15 each, contact the Railway Children website at http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/article.asp?id=876 or just call 01270 757596.

Local enterprise plans will throw councils into turmoil

Transport could lose out if the boundaries of the new economic bodies are decided on the basis of rivalry between councils rather than co-operation

Over the last few months the Government's proposal to establish Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to replace the system of regional development agencies across England has preoccupied local government managers and politicians. It has unwittingly created a level of tension between councils not seen since the turmoil of the 1990s local government review.

Its silence it seems that the transport sector has not fully realised the implications of the proposals and the impact they may have on local government contractors, consultants and suppliers. Those in the transport profession who are not engaged in this new development could find themselves waking up to a new world not of their making and missing out on new opportunities.

England's regional development agencies are to be abolished by April 2012. As a replacement, the Government has asked local authorities and the business community to work together to establish LEPs that reflect "natural economic patterns" and submit proposals by 6 September for consideration. The selection process will be dealt with in the forthcoming sub-national growth white paper.

The guidance thus far has been limited, but the expectation is that LEPs will involve more than one upper-tier authority and be of a substantial enough size to be a force to be reckoned with. It is understood that somewhere between 12 and 40 new LEPs is favoured.

The key issues for planners and engineers is that in many instances the economic areas will differ from the current administrative boundaries and, in turn, this could lead to new opportunities for shared services and a change in arrangements for service provision.

New boundaries will inevitably lead to new governance arrangements, revised priorities, new transport models and networks to be managed in partnership. How this will be tackled remains to be seen, but it is certain that there will be very little new money to help make it happen.

Ministers have already suggested that LEPs could take on new powers for planning, housing, transport and economic development together with a range of other responsibilities. Although the concept of bringing together such powers through a place-based approach involving both the public and private sectors is commendable, the fact that it comes at a time when budgets are being reduced significantly could prevent local authorities embracing the LEP concept as well as they would have liked.

Apart from LEPs, the main preoccupation of local government at present is the opportunity to bid for some of the new £1bn Regional Growth Fund (2011-13) before the deadline of the end of this year. LEPs are expected to take the lead role in submitting bids to support projects aimed at boosting economic development and growth.

> **Tensions are emerging between tiers of local government with different opinions on the best economic area for LEPs to cover**

With the comprehensive spending review looming this could be the biggest show in town for securing funding. It will be important to ensure that any new transport schemes and initiatives are framed so that they demonstrate more strongly than ever their support for the economy and job creation. Local authorities which are slow in establishing council and business led consortia to access this new fund will find themselves at a disadvantage.

The new fund is not insignificant, but in the scale of things it will not go far. The Regional Growth Fund would constitute a 65% reduction in the current spending power of the regional development agencies. On top of this the Treasury has already frozen almost £2bn of European cash allocated to England. Any delay in the transition to the LEP arrangement means that critical EU deadlines for funding bids could be missed, or fail because of the lack of match funding.

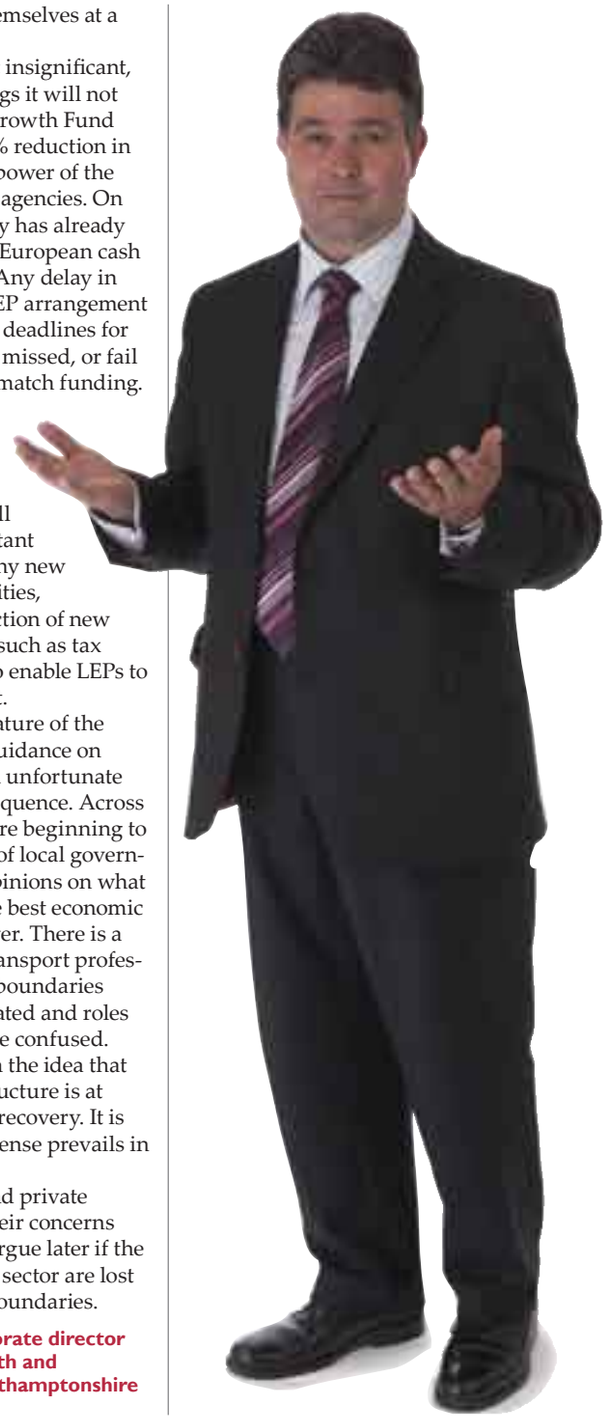
Coupled with anticipated cuts in transport spending of up to 40% the situation looks grim. It will be increasingly important to take advantage of any new powers and opportunities, including the introduction of new funding mechanisms such as tax increment financing to enable LEPs to maximise their impact.

The "permissive" nature of the limited government guidance on LEPs has generated an unfortunate and unexpected consequence. Across the country tensions are beginning to emerge between tiers of local government with different opinions on what they consider to be the best economic area for the LEP to cover. There is a real danger that the transport profession could lose out as boundaries become more complicated and roles and responsibilities are confused.

Few would question the idea that transport and infrastructure is at the heart of economic recovery. It is crucial that common sense prevails in the LEP debate.

If both the public and private sectors do not voice their concerns now then we cannot argue later if the needs of the transport sector are lost in the squabble over boundaries.

Tony Ciaburro is corporate director for environment, growth and commissioning at Northamptonshire County Council.



Will the Government grasp the nettle of user charging?

Tolls on new infrastructure are not the political impossibility many claim, as experience in the US and Europe demonstrates. But politicians must be prepared to rise to the challenge

"A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you are talking real money."

That comment by the American senator Everett Dirksen will have a familiar ring for the new transport secretary, Philip Hammond. Not only is the Department for Transport the least politically sensitive Whitehall department to cut, it is also probably the easiest, because the impact of even the most damaging investment cancellation or postponement can be masked for years.

The current DfT budget is roughly £13bn. So on the assumption that the chancellor will insist on a cut of at least 25%, that means a saving of more than £3bn on current plans.

Where should the cuts be made? It is tempting to chase candle-ends. There are many of them. I recently wrote about my local council digging up the road outside my house and surrounding streets at a cost in excess of £40,000 when there wasn't a pothole to be seen for miles. Rhondda Council, courtesy of the Welsh Assembly, has spent £190,000 to build three bridges across a new bypass so that dormice can cross the road safely. I will eat my hat if a single dormouse uses the high-wire walkways over the next year.

But even that folly has been trumped by Worcestershire County Council's £3m splurge on a 100m bus lane, at a cost of more than £12,000 a metre. The determination to preserve free bus travel for all those over 60, costing more than £1bn a year and rising fast, is yet another nonsense. But scrapping these and other stupidities will save only a few hundred million pounds. To get to anything like the amount required requires a more radical approach.

An obvious target is the £5bn of government subsidy swallowed up the railways each year. There is already softening-up talk encouraged by ministers of an above-inflation increase in rail fares from next January.

I would not be against a relatively sharp increase, say 10%, in both rail and bus fares, in order to protect investment, provided there was a corresponding increase in vehicle excise and fuel duties. Tougher environmental taxes on the highest-emission vehicles could raise several hundred million pounds. What makes no sense is to widen still further the damaging gap that has opened up between the cost of motoring and the cost of public transport.

All of this, of course, would be extremely unpopular, which is why ministers will be reluctant to go down this route. But there is nothing to stop Mr Hammond from cutting the Highways Agency budget by announcing that in future all major new road construction projects will be financed by tolls. A recent holiday in France, where I forked out to travel down the superbly-engineered Autoroute du Sud, has reinforced my belief that most motorists in this country would be prepared to pay for faster, easier, quicker and, above all, more reliable journeys.

> **User charges are a much better solution to the yawning budget deficit than slashing vitally-needed transport investment**

For more than 50 years, successive governments have refused to introduce tolls on new motorways in Britain, with the inevitable result is that we now have the most congested strategic road network in Europe. The key to making tolls acceptable is to introduce the concept of value added. New transport infrastructure, whether it be an additional lane on a motorway or a tunnel under Stonehenge, should be subject to charges.

To those who claim this would be impractical and politically unsellable, I suggest they visit those meccas of motoring Los Angeles and San Diego, where added-value tolling lanes are working well and the politicians who introduced them are being re-elected.

Another step on the road back to sanity should be the revival of the policy of lorry road-user charging, which the Labour government abandoned. A scheme modelled on the successful German satellite-charging operation could raise up to £500m a year, particularly if all heavy goods vehicles, including those in foreign ownership, were made to pay the true costs of the damage they do to the environment and the road network.

Another big advantage of reviving LRUC would be to demonstrate that a national road-pricing scheme would be entirely feasible given the political will. Local authorities, after Edinburgh and Manchester's bruising referendums, are understandably nervous of local pricing schemes, but those reverses should not affect the introduction of workplace parking charges. They could raise several hundred millions of pounds for local transport investment.

User charges are a much better solution to the yawning budget deficit than slashing vitally-needed transport investment. I accept that it is politically challenging. But that's what we elect politicians for. It's all too easy to slash transport infrastructure.

If the forthcoming public expenditure squeeze results in major cuts in road and rail investment as well as delays to Crossrail, then we will know the challenge has been ducked.

Adam Raphael, a former executive editor of *The Observer* and transport correspondent of *The Economist*, is the associate editor of *Transport Times*. He is a former presenter of BBC's Newsnight and an award-winning investigative journalist.

City transport services face a perfect storm

The spending review could have disastrous effects on public transport, particularly buses, in our cities. Or it could pave the way for decentralised decision-making and greater efficiency, says **Jonathan Bray**

As everyone knows there are tough times ahead for transport, as the sector is set to take a sizeable hit in the spending review. However, in the city-regions there's a fear that unless the spending review is carried out carefully, the UK's key conurbations could be disproportionately affected – with potentially drastic and divisive consequences.

The reasoning is simple. Local transport spending in the cities outside London starts from a lower base (public spending per head on transport in London is two and a half times the level it is in the regions of the West Midlands and the North) and has less protection than other parts of the transport budget (such as London and National Rail). This means that unprotected areas of transport spending could take the biggest hit. Analysis for PTEG by Grant Thornton found that unprotected capital spending could fall by nearly 90% and unprotected revenue spending by between 56% and 85%. Needless to say this will have drastic repercussions as well being divisive through the sheer scale of the mismatch between spending in London and spending on the next tier of major cities.

The revenue spending challenges for the city regions could be exacerbated by the mandatory requirement to fund concessionary fares for older and disabled people. With demand growing, funding being cut back and the element of direct grant to PTEs due to be absorbed within wider CLG funding, there could be severe impacts on non-mandatory front line services, such as concessions for children and young people, "lifeline" supported bus services, and bus stations and interchanges. Broadly speaking a 10% cut in overall revenue spending translates into a 20% cut in non-mandatory front line services.

This could create an unpalatable situation where the Government is spending a billion pounds a year on free passes for older people for an evaporating bus network on which children and young people are losing their concessions.

All these challenges could be further exacerbated if Bus Service Operators Grant is eliminated or reduced. The bus *is* public transport for most people outside London – yet the support and tax concessions the bus gets are relatively modest when compared with rail or air.

This is despite the fact that bus users in our areas are typically the young, the old or the poor – a world away from a cross-section of the users of more heavily subsidised planes and trains. If BSOG is reduced then operators will respond accordingly – by taking out services or increasing fares. This will put further pressure on PTE revenue budgets to fill gaps in networks.

> **All too often transport authorities pick up the costs of schemes that benefit other sectors, which also have better protected budgets**

All of which points to the need for a spending review which is carefully calibrated for its regional implications and where particular care is exercised over the interconnected issues of funding for the free bus pass, wider subsidy and revenue flows and BSOG.

If these dangers can be skilfully navigated then there are opportunities for bringing about further decentralisation of decision-making on transport and achieving greater efficiency and synergy in its provision at the city-region level.

For example, there is more that could be done to integrate local rail networks with wider city-region transport networks. Where rail powers are devolved, passengers get a better deal as a result. This can be seen on Merseyrail Electrics (formerly known locally as "Miseryrail" but, since devolution of franchising powers, now among the highest scorers for customer satisfaction) and more recently on London Overground.

How this might be achieved in practice rightly depends on local aspirations and local circumstances but options include a greater role on non-major stations and greater franchising responsibilities. This devolutionary process could also open the way to tram-trains' transformational potential.

There is also the potential to drive better value through the initiative formerly known as "total place". All too often it's transport authorities that pick up the costs of schemes that benefit other sectors (sectors which also now have better protected budgets than we do). For example, the promotion of cycling and walking reduces pressure on health budgets. At the same time the many measures that PTEs currently take to link the jobless with jobs result in direct savings for the Department for Work and Pensions.

Our major cities cannot afford to have their public transport provision up-ended at a time when transport has a key role to play in meeting wider objectives for carbon reduction, for stimulating private sector investment and for addressing issues of social justice and regional balance.

We realise that there are tough times ahead. But the way the spending review is calibrated will make the difference between a mission impossible for the cities or the opportunity for some radical moves to consolidate funding flows and responsibilities in a way that gives the city regions the basis for future progress.

Jonathan Bray is director of the PTEG Support Unit

Jonathan Bray: "There could be a severe impact on non-mandatory services such as concessions for young people"

Wanted: innovation in rural transport provision

Urban models of service provision do not work in rural areas – but a fundamental rethink putting local communities in charge could unlock innovation and reduce costs, says **Matthew Taylor**

Matthew Taylor: "Community-based transport services have a track record of success"

Late last summer a group of national organisations with an interest in the sustainability of rural communities met to plan a "manifesto" for rural communities to present to the new government in 2010 – whoever that might be.

United by a determination to reverse the gradual erosion of many rural villages as living, working communities, the group established itself as the Rural Coalition, and published a prospectus setting out our concerns and initial proposals. We focused on a key range of issues: affordable housing in rural villages to sustain mixed working communities; strengthening the rural economy to improve prospects and wages; transforming the growth of market towns from endless housing estates to attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods; how to maintain and improve services in a time of likely Government cutbacks; and underlying all this, how to empower communities to do more of this for themselves.

What we said in that prospectus about rural services like public transport was this:

"Every healthy community needs its services: including transport, education, social support and financial access. But it's extremely unlikely – as experience proves – that the form of such services demanded by large, urban communities will be equally satisfactory for those in the countryside. Or it may be that those services designed for urban use are simply too expensive for smaller rural communities. As a result, and all too often, governments simply cut them out.

"That's why it's essential that in future rural services are far better tailored to local needs – and that is best done when they are determined not by remote legislators but by the communities they are there to serve. The result, in many cases, will be different ways of delivering rural services better suited to the needs of those communities, combined with a welcome decrease in cost."

This August, nearly 12 months later, we published our full report. Called *The Rural Challenge* and containing more than 40 recommendations, it could easily have been called *Delivering the Big Society in Little Places*.

A review of rural service provision over the last two decades makes depressing reading – especially to the approximately 10 million people (over 19% of England's population) who live there. Rural areas often lack even the very basic services enjoyed by their urban counterparts.

Of course service closures are not unique to rural areas, and the need to find savings is now universal. But time and again, the impact is greater in rural communities. Quite simply, the next nearest outlet is likely to be much further away and less accessible by public transport in rural rather than urban areas – assuming the public transport itself is available at all.

> **The last government made significant investment in rural public transport – but to little effect**

Public policy has been focused on service quality and choice. While this is desirable and important to rural people too, it misses the basic rural necessity of service accessibility. Having no accessible service means having no choice at all.

Transport is a good example of an essential rural service not well addressed by urban models of delivery. The adequate provision of rural public transport is viewed as a core issue by rural communities and service providers alike, all the more important for its role in connecting rural people with their homes, workplaces and other services. The last government made significant investment in rural public transport – but to little effect. In a recent survey public transport was the policy area that most rural residents felt was a priority for government action, 28% of respondents placing it in their top four areas for action.

Rural transport raises three core challenges for public policy makers:

First, the inability of public transport to adequately serve a wider range of destinations. Combined with rising fares, the loss of local facilities such as post offices, shops and health centres and the growing reliance on the private vehicle, this has caused serious problems for those without access to private transport – especially the old, the young, and the housebound. Given a growing but ageing rural population, and the prospect of costlier fuel or carbon rationing, the transport needs of those without access to private cars is likely to increase rather than decline.

Second, despite widespread calls for better integration of public transport, rural areas are generally poorly connected to wider regional and national public transport networks such as train and express bus services. This is partly because rural areas are rarely included in strategic planning exercises at regional or national levels. They are perceived to be marginal to the needs or viability of major transport proposals.

Third, the challenge to reduce carbon emissions in order to help mitigate climate change. Transport is a major producer of carbon dioxide and rural areas are perceived – rightly or wrongly – to be a leading culprit. There is no doubt that improved public transport could help reduce these carbon emissions, but it needs to be provided in affordable and therefore often innovative ways.

As I write there is serious speculation about the Government's inten-

tions over the Bus Service Operators Grant, which refunds most of the fuel duty paid by bus companies, and whether it might be scrapped or reformed in the spending review. For urban centres this could reduce the quantity, quality and choice of public transport provision. But in rural communities it could mean no provision at all – especially if reforms include linking the subsidy to the number of passengers carried, which would directly favour provision to large urban population centres at the cost of rural communities.

So we concluded that policy and funding need to move on from urban transport models, and look to innovative solutions for tailoring public transport to rural needs. Where public transport, in any form, fails to meet needs, community-based solutions should be supported to fill the gap. These can be formal community transport such as car pools and minibus provision, or less formal schemes such as organised good neighbour and car-sharing.

There is a track record of success in developing local community-based transport services, both to meet specific needs of disadvantaged groups within rural communities, and the wider needs of the rural community as a whole. Many of these bottom-up schemes serve to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of commercial services, drawing upon social enterprise models of organisation and financing.

An excellent example of service innovation can be found in Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire has regular traditional buses running on inter-urban routes (called InterConnect), then a pre-booked service (called CallConnect) filling the gaps by running from preset pick-up points in the outlying villages. CallConnect will take people to other local pick-up/set-down points or (for longer journeys) it will take them to meet an InterConnect service or to a local rail station. The third layer of this transport system is a dial-a-ride service which offers door-to-door provision for those with mobility problems who cannot manage CallConnect.

However initiatives like these face serious challenges including securing continuous funding, finding and retaining volunteer drivers, and restrictive legislation.

So our core recommendation on transport is that strategic and local strategic transport planning should take greater account of access issues for dispersed rural communities to ensure they are effectively linked to regional and national road and rail networks; and support for local public transport in rural areas should be prioritised towards innovative programmes supporting community-based schemes, especially where these can offer less costly solutions than traditional public transport better suited to urban centres.

The new Government's commitment to the "Big Society" in an era of relative austerity in public funding sets a rural challenge, yet provides clear rural opportunities.

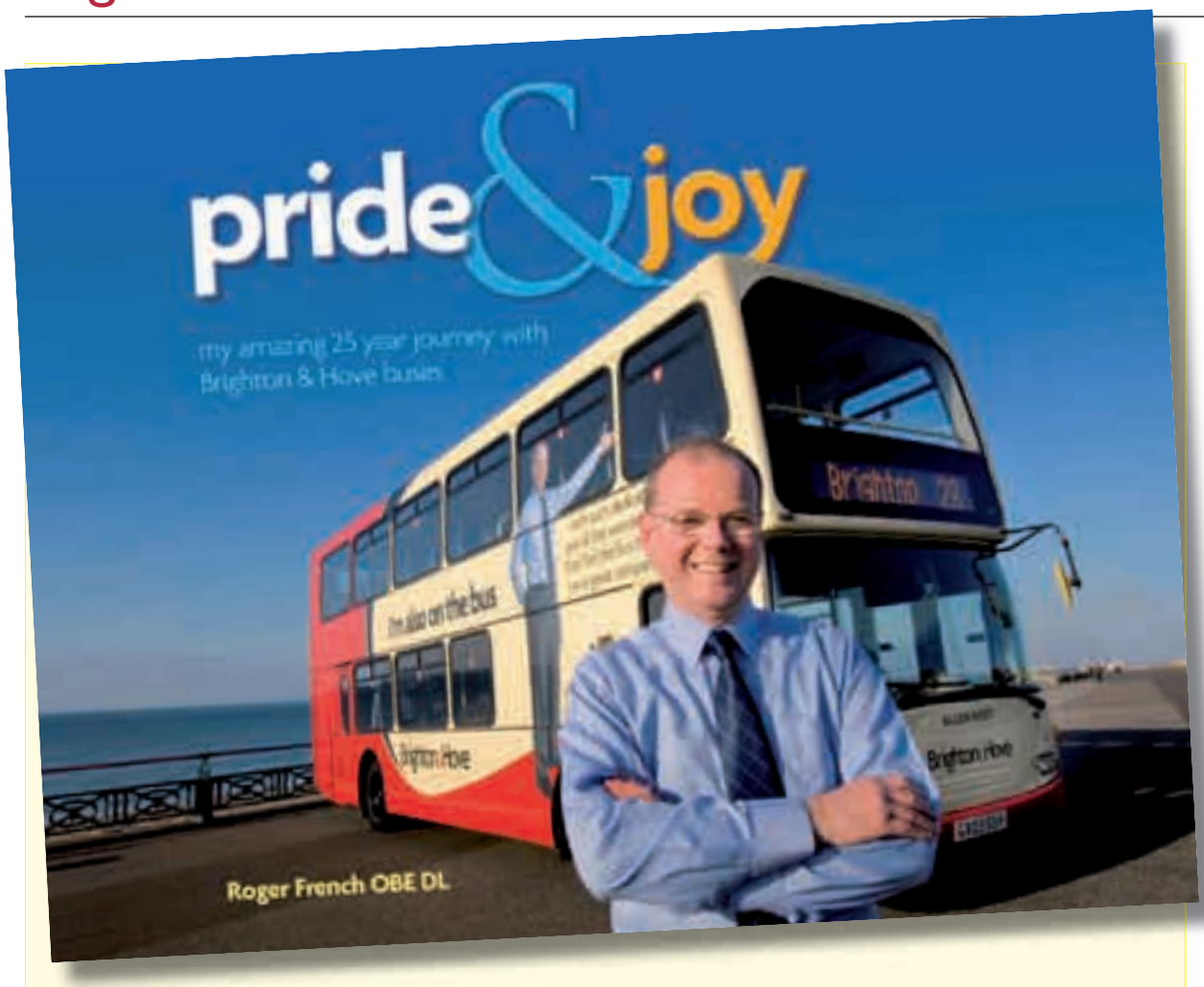
We need to achieve better rural services, at less cost. To do that we need to harness the power and understanding of local communities themselves to deliver their own tailored solutions. The public expenditure cuts which all public services face for many years to come will, without a change in direction, only exacerbate an already untenable status quo.

In contrast, a government willing to let go of national models of delivery, and support innovative local community solutions integrated with public service provision, will find not only are better services provided that meet local needs, but that these can be done at less cost than trying to provide urban service models in a rural setting.

The Rural Coalition comprises the following organisations:

- **Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE).**
- **Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).**
- **The Country Land and Business Association (CLA).**
- **The Local Government Group (LG Group).**
- **The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).**
- **The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA).**

Matthew Taylor is chair of the Rural Coalition. He is a Liberal Democrat peer and former MP for Truro and St Austell



Seaside special

In *Pride and Joy*, Roger French recalls his quarter-century with Brighton & Hove buses. **David Fowler** introduces extracts from the book

In recent years Brighton and Hove has become a byword for successful bus policies and increased passenger numbers.

The city broke free of the national trend of declining patronage in the early 1990s and has since then enjoyed 17 unbroken years of growth.

At the centre of this has been Roger French, now managing director of Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company, who arrived 28 years ago as assistant traffic manager for Southdown Motor Services, part of the monolithic National Bus Company.

He arrived as the bus industry stood on the brink of a revolution, with deregulation, the break-up of the monolithic National Bus Company and the sale of its subsidiaries following in rapid succession. The Brighton & Hove brand re-emerged when Southdown was split into divisions in 1985. The tumultuous and exhilarating quarter century that followed has taken in a management buyout, a subsequent takeover by Go-Ahead and much more.

> **For anyone in the bus industry wanting to emulate Brighton's success, *Pride & Joy* is essential reading**

Roger French describes his experiences in *Pride & Joy*, the story of his 25-year journey. His highly readable account covers everything from the evolution as a business and the factors and the people behind its success – to the nitty gritty details of its fleet and services.

For anyone in the bus industry wanting to emulate Brighton's success, *Pride & Joy* is essential reading. But not only is it a good read in its own right, it's vibrant and colourful with genuinely excellent photography against the backdrop of the city and the South Downs. The design is courtesy of Best Impressions, the design agency closely associated with the company for many years and responsible for its livery and the award-winning "I'm on the Bus" campaign featuring local people.

Transport Times is delighted to be able to whet your appetite with some extracts from the book – and on page 25, we announce the winners of last month's competition, and a special offer for *TT readers*.

On this page, Roger French recounts the story of deregulation and the run-up to the management buyout and overleaf he explains the background to the company's success in increasing passenger numbers.

I arrived in Brighton in 1982. The job had the grand title of Assistant Traffic Manager with Southdown Motor Services, and I would be based at Southdown's impressive Freshfield Road head office in Brighton. Southdown was a highly respected company within the National Bus Company (NBC) and, along with other well-known names such as Ribble, Crosville and Midland Red, was one of the largest. By the time I arrived, Southdown's operations extended along the coast from Eastbourne to Portsmouth and inland across Sussex and North East Hampshire. The company also had an extensive coach fleet, operating day excursions as well as scheduled routes for National Express and holiday tours for National Holidays.

I had previously been an area manager with South Wales Transport, looking after the Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot area. SWT was a small, friendly company run on informal lines of communication. When I arrived in Brighton at this large, and what sometimes appeared bureaucratic, company it was quite a culture shock. I soon realised that the company's sheer size necessitated more formal working arrangements, but being someone who liked to keep close to the action - ie, seeing passengers and staff on buses on the road – it took time to adapt.

I joined a very experienced senior management team headed by Michael Sedgley as general manager, supported by chief officers Philip Ayers as traffic manager, Derek Wilks as secretary and chief accountant, and Simon Brown as chief engineer. They were a formidable team with considerable knowledge and rightly respected in the bus industry.

In 1982 we were part of the South East Region of NBC headed up by the late Derek Fytche, who was also Southdown's chairman.

Derek Fytche had achieved success at revitalising the Green Line network of limited stop and express services in London and the Home Counties, and encouraged other NBC companies surrounding London to follow suit developing their own limited stop route networks. Taking advantage of the relaxed licensing arrangements for express coach operation which had been introduced in 1980 as a result of that year's Transport Act, a network of limited stop longer distance routes had already been introduced during the early 1980s.

In the event, these limited stop ventures had all but disappeared by the mid-1980s. At the time it was exciting to be involved with these initiatives, as they were about innova-

tion and expansion and tapping into new markets, whereas the local bus networks were suffering from declining passenger numbers as car use relentlessly increased and subsidies paid by the county councils in East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire were inevitably cut year after year.

It was this spiral of decline which the White Paper published by the Conservative Government in 1984 was designed to halt. Well, more accurately, Nicholas Ridley, the transport secretary in Margaret Thatcher's Government, wanted to cut the public subsidies still further and unleash the regulated market to free market competition and privatisation. Ridley had the notion that a deregulated privatised world for buses would see lots of small companies setting up and running services, much as the horse bus pioneers had done in the mid-1800s. If he had studied history more closer, he would not have been surprised to see that within 20 years his vision was in tatters. Just as consolidation came quickly in the late 1880s, so it did too in the late 1980s.

However, deregulation was a huge success in sweeping away all the unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy that had built up since the 1930s, and eliminated wasteful costs to deliver a much more customer-focused service at a much reduced cost to the public purse. It also encouraged innovation and investment in improved local bus services, and with much more success than had been achieved with the early ventures in the limited stop bus market following the 1980 Transport Act.

The White Paper contained radical proposals, not only to deregulate the market but also to privatise all the subsidiaries of the National Bus Company, including Southdown. NBC's Southern Region had already begun seeing the advantages of splitting up its larger bus companies into smaller units, led by managers who could respond much more quickly to changes in market demand.

This process left Southdown as one of the largest companies, and by 1984 it was obvious that the long-standing organisation and way of working which had served the company well during the long period of regulation and nationalisation would not be fit for purpose for the new era that lay ahead.

So one summer's day in 1984, the Southdown senior management team took off for an "awayday" at a secluded hotel in the beautiful mid-Sussex countryside and came up with a plan to reorganise the company into four autonomous bus divisions, each headed by a manager and a fleet engineer who could take effective strategic decisions as well as manage operations close to the action and the customer.

Brighton & Hove would be one of four geographic divisions, the others being Hampshire, West Sussex and East & Mid Sussex. A fifth division would run all the company's coaches, including the Freshfield Road garage.

Arrangements went ahead for these changes to be introduced from March 1985, which is the beginning of the story of the recreation of Brighton & Hove as a separate force once again.

Getting fit for privatisation

I was fortunate to be appointed as manager of the new Brighton & Hove division within Southdown, with Alan Eatwell becoming fleet engineer. Alan and I decamped from Southdown House in Freshfield Road to the former Brighton Hove & District head office in Conway Street, Hove, and began creating a new and exciting era for buses in this area when the new structure began on 1 March 1985.

> **If he had studied history more closer, Ridley would not have been surprised to see that within 20 years his vision was in tatters**

We wanted to start with a fresh organisation that would be dynamic and responsive. One of the first things was to put the customer and the staff at the heart of everything. Perhaps ahead of our time, and it certainly seemed revolutionary, we appointed a customer service manager within our new team as well as business managers who would be receptive to change. We also appointed dedicated staff managers – one for Hove garage and one for each of the Brighton garages. This was to make sure we gave proper appreciation for the hard work carried out by staff and that their needs were properly addressed.

We were lucky to inherit a great team who, once released from the constraints of bureaucracy which Southdown had placed on us all, soon responded positively and dynamically.

The final split

By September 1985 it was obvious that even though Southdown had been split into smaller divisions, this would not meet the Government's desire for small autonomous companies with the potential to compete with each other.

So it was agreed that from January 1986 the once mighty Southdown would be formally split into two with the Brighton & Hove division, together with the coaches and staff based at Freshfield Road and its associated outstation in Victoria Coach Station, being formed into a separate company that would re-activate the dormant BH&D company, with Michael Sedgley as managing director.

The other three Southdown divisions – Hampshire, West Sussex and East & Mid Sussex – would continue as a smaller Southdown Motor Services. It had previously been announced that the Southdown Engineering Services would be hived off as a separate company within a new engineering holding group.

As 1985 drew to a close, with Royal Assent being given to the Transport Act in October, it was announced that privatisation of NBC's subsidiaries would move ahead as soon as companies were in a fit state to be sold off.

A Brighton & Hove double decker against the Sussex Downs near Beachy Head

photo: Ray Stenning

No more red tape

Bus deregulation took effect in all parts of the country outside London on 26 October 1986. Eight months prior to this, by 28 February, every bus company had to register with the Traffic Commissioner all routes it would run on a commercial basis, along with timetables. This would give local authorities time to assess gaps in service provision and arrange supplementary timetables to be put out to competitive tender.

There's no doubt the Office of Fair Trading and today's Competition Commission would have revelled in the idea of [Brighton & Hove and council-owned Brighton Buses] registering competing bus routes all over the area. But it wasn't to be.

Long experience of how to run a bus service that's appreciated by passengers taught us the priorities to achieve a commercially successful and financially sustainable bus network.

The benefit of deregulation has undoubtedly been to inspire us to provide the best quality of service and seek continuous improvement as the years have passed. The market being open to potential competition at any time is a good enough discipline to ensure we achieved that objective. As the OFT and Competition Commission observe, the market needs to be contestable, and this has proved to be the case in Brighton and Hove over the last 25 years.

Evidence also shows that passengers don't find favour with competing services.

Media reports of bus wars on the streets of Glasgow, Manchester and Sheffield appeared soon after deregulation began, and common complaints were that everything was too confusing, with little information, timetables that kept changing, an array of different fares and the inability for tickets bought on one company's bus to be used to return on another.

Owning a bus company

Following the Transport Act receiving Royal Assent in October 1985, NBC made a point of encouraging management buyouts as part of the privatisation process of all its subsidiary companies. During 1986 and early 1987 much work was being done at Brighton & Hove to prepare a buyout bid for the business.

It was announced in late 1986 by NBC that formal bids had been received from three outside parties to

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purchase the company. These were Carlton (PSV) Ltd, Stagecoach and Robert Beattie. Beattie owned a company called Frontsource, which went on to purchase all the engineering companies from NBC.

NBC followed this up in the new year with a directive that final formal offers had to be made in sealed envelopes by Thursday 26 March 1987. I remember travelling up on the train from Hove to Victoria with colleagues Michael Sedgley, Bruce Sellars, Alan Eatwell and Rosemary Holland that morning to meet our financial advisors, Grant Thornton, for one more meeting before submitting our bid envelope. We took five sealed envelopes with us and discussed which one to submit over lunch in a restaurant just round the corner from NBC's headquarters above Victoria Coach Station!

It was a tense time. Stagecoach had already successfully acquired Hampshire bus and it was known to be hungry to buy more. Bid too little and we'd lose out – and could be out of a job. Bid too much and we could saddle ourselves and the company with a financial burden for many years, especially as we knew there was a need for finance to fund much needed vehicle purchases.

In the event, we were told within days that our bid had been successful and completion was expected within a matter of six weeks. The company we'd all worked for, and had a huge commitment to, would soon be our very own, with a great team of staff and a fantastic market in which to develop a successful bus network.

It's difficult to portray the excitement of running a bus company in which we all had a personal stake, particularly having only ever previously worked within a large nationalised company subject to government policy, and sometimes, severe financial restrictions with reliance on local government subsidies which were not rising in real terms. To be free from these restrictions was hugely liberating, as was being able to prioritise services for the customer and strive to make a profit rather than constantly trying to minimise losses. The regulated regime had led to so many inefficiencies that losses had become endemic and pretty much accepted as an inevitable consequence of running a bus company. Consequently, the passenger was experiencing a declining industry lacking in investment and innovation.

Now, in the privatised world, we couldn't possibly make a loss, not if we wanted to survive as a business.

We're on a roll

Ever since we acquired a track record of growing the market for bus travel from 1993 people have asked about the secret of this success. Achieving a consistent positive trend in bus use, which for many years has been against a national background of continued decline outside London has been something to be proud of. Over the years a succession of newly-appointed ministers and civil servants from the Department for Transport have been welcomed on visits to the coast to see if they can find a magic formula of achieving bus growth.

Well, of course there is no magic formula. Success has come about because of the people involved, particularly the team working for the company at all levels. I cannot praise them enough. There's no doubt that having the right people is a major factor in achieving a successful bus service.

We don't just benefit from those working for the company as employees, it's also the policies and attitude of the business owners and, crucially, those partners, particularly in the local authority, who play such an important part. It's not so much a case of grand strategies, mission statements and visions. It's been more about continuous incremental improvement, prioritising the basics of what's important to the passenger together with attention to detail and a passion for giving the best possible customer service.

Some of the factors which have been significant in achieving growth in Brighton and Hove's bus use are external and could apply anywhere in the country, while others are specific to the characteristics found in this coastal area. Other factors have arisen from internal policies which have been of their time and enabled development and growth of the company.

One of the main external factors has been the role of the car. Huge growth in car use, as prosperity returned after World War II, saw people leave public transport in droves. This momentum for modal shift was accompanied in many towns by extensive road-building and new infrastructure, such as multi-storey car parks to cater for the birth of the new breed of motorist. Because the freedom available to make a journey whenever desired and by any chosen route seemed such a world away from travelling by bus, people soon became hooked on this growing travel mode and bus use fell into inexorable decline.

Some towns, such as Brighton and Hove, never embraced large scale road-building. Whereas other town centres saw significant demolition to allow for road widening and car parks, with grand inner trunk roads with underpasses and flyovers, Brighton continued to embrace the car on its Regency and Victorian influenced infrastructure. Looking today at the city centre setting of the truly magnificent Royal Pavilion and Victoria Gardens to Old Steine 'green lung', thank goodness these delights were preserved unscathed. What can now be seen as foresight in a lack of infrastructure development to pander to growing car use in the 1960s has turned into a great asset in that we had to face up sooner than other areas to the fact that continual growth in car use was simply not an option.

It was all very well to aspire to own a car, but if you lived in one of the city's beautiful Regency houses converted into flats then

there is, frankly, nowhere to park a car anywhere near home. I carried out a fascinating exercise one day by counting all the people on the electoral roll in one street in Brunswick who lived in those beautiful Regency houses.

There were 316 adults living in 243 converted flats in 70 houses. The number of car parking spaces on street outside the houses is 38. No wonder residents have come to accept parking management measures to bring some order to what otherwise was a chaotic fight for limited spaces. Bear in mind there are 57 buses an hour passing by at the bottom of the road in each direction and you begin to see why people question the need to own a car!

East Sussex County Council, the highway authority for the area until the creation of the unitary council in 1997, realised that action was necessary. But amazingly it proposed a major road-building scheme as recently as the early 1980s which would have seen significant demolition through the North Laine area to allow a Preston Circus Relief Road to be constructed.

This caused considerable consternation and it quickly became obvious the plan was never going to become a reality due to the scale of opposition. By 1988 it had been officially abandoned in favour of implementing a package of traffic management measures to make the best use of the existing road network and look at ways of giving priority to buses.

This led Brighton & Hove and Brighton Buses to join forces and launch FREEWAY – the campaign to tackle traffic congestion – in March 1987. This high profile campaign called for Brighton Borough Council to make the Christmas seasonal park and ride operations, which had begun in 1986, a permanent feature on Saturdays throughout the year and all week in summer. It also encouraged the County Council to introduce bus lanes in London Road and Grand Parade, with priority for buses at other key junctions, improvements to signs, and better parking enforcement.

Looking back now, we can see how FREEWAY was a huge success at laying the foundations for a climate of action. Reports were produced to explain the need for bus priority measures, for park and ride, and explaining why a light rail scheme would never be financially viable for the area.

Indeed, in October 1988, East Sussex County Council with Brighton Borough Council launched a new traffic management scheme called 'Breeze into Brighton'. This involved restricting access around the Clock Tower exclusively for buses and taxis with an inner ring road on existing streets for through traffic. After an initial favourable reception, the plans ran into trouble from residents protesting that the scheme would bring more traffic near their homes, particularly in the Montpelier Road area.

Although the plan was officially abandoned as a complete package in 1989, due to the controversy it had aroused, looking back now the changes were all largely implemented in stages in the mid-1990s. This was helped by the road capacity released in the central area when the A27 bypass was built and opened in 1992. It's to the credit of traffic planners that bus and taxi priority was implemented in stages to take advantage of the unique opportunity to re-allocate freed up road space as the by-pass opened.

> **'I liken it to baking a cake. You must include all the ingredients if you want to make a nice tasty sponge, together with the right oven temperature and cooking time'**

Going for Growth

1994 was something of a watershed year for the company in that it was the first 12 months of year-on-year growth after 35 years of declining passenger journeys. Looking back now one can see significant factors all coming to fruition at that time. The first stretch of high profile bus lanes opened in 1993 and 1995. There were significant improvements in the local economy as the depths of the early-1990s recession came to an end. Employment picked up and the retail and hospitality trade, both key sectors for the city, began to recover. The company began its new culture of change and expansion under new owners, the Go-Ahead Group, which successfully floated on the stock market that year.

There was an air of excitement in the company as these opportunities combined to create an entrepreneurial atmosphere of being bold, with increases in frequencies after the cutbacks in the late 1980s and early 1990s to reflect the recession, and to be adventurous in devising high profile new pricing strategies such as the reduction to 50p of the newly introduced CentreFare and the new simplified 60p flat fare on the Busy Bee minibus service.

We'd already launched our first Passenger Charter in 1991 and by 1994 were developing a real passion for excellent customer service. It was also at this time that we developed individual branding for the most popular routes to make them stand out in the network and become eye-catching products.

At the same time Sussex University launched its new transport strategy which saw students being encouraged to use public transport as swingeing restrictions were introduced on parking at the Falmer campus. As described later, the student market has proven to be a very significant part of the overall market for bus travel in the city, particularly as there are over 32,000 students in the city.

Improved frequencies, easy-to-understand and good value tickets, modern buses, a passion for customer service, investment in clear brands and high profile marketing have all proved a success. Combined with the local authority investing in highway measures to help buses remain free-flowing, this has become the basis of a winning formula which has continued for the ensuing 16 years.

I liken it to baking a cake. You must include all the ingredients if you want to make a nice tasty sponge, together with the right oven temperature and cooking time.

And so it is with achieving more bus passenger journeys. All the aforementioned ingredients of frequency, value for money pricing, investment, customer service and strong marketing are essential – none can be left out.

But there are also key ingredients needed from the local authority working in partnership and these are also essential to the baking. They're the equivalent of the oven together with its temperature setting and cooking time – the environment in which the cake bakes!

Reader offer – and competition winners

Last month we offered three copies of *Pride & Joy* by Roger French which you could win by answering the following questions:

1. **When was the £1 city-wide flat fare introduced?**
2. **How many years of passenger growth has Brighton & Hove experienced?**
3. **Large photographs of passengers began appearing on the sides of buses in 2005. Under what generic slogan?**

The answers are: 2001; 17; and "I'm on the bus" (though we allowed "I'm also on the bus" as on Roger's own version.)

The three winners are: Andy Maule, Service Performance Account Manager, Auckland Regional Transport Authority, New Zealand; Andy Young, Senior Transport Planner/Access Officer, Torbay Council; and David Hurdle, transport planning consultant, Spalding, Lincs.

For other *Transport Times* readers **we're delighted to be able to offer the book for the special postage inclusive price of £17.90** (normal retail price £19.50) either by post at Transport Times Book Offer, Brighton & Hove Bus Company, 43 Conway Street, HOVE BN3 3LT with cheques made payable to "Brighton & Hove Bus Company", or online from www.buses.co.uk and using the special discount code MY25YEARS when confirming the order.

It is also available via Amazon at full price.

Pride & Joy – my amazing 25 year journey with Brighton & Hove buses is published by Best Impressions.

All sales income is being donated to two local charities: the Martlets Hospice of which Mr French is chairman, and the Argus Appeal of which he is a trustee. £10,000 has already been raised.

Partnership or franchising –

Industry leaders will debate this and other questions at a *Transport Times* conference next month. Here, **Moir Lockhe**

Joint initiatives in West Yorkshire have included the introduction of First's ftr (left) and guided bus lanes (bottom right). But are they enough?

The *Transport Times* Annual Bus Conference on 7 October comes at a crucial time for the industry. We'll be just two weeks away from the Government's announcement on the comprehensive spending review which could change so much for the industry.

Of course it's absolutely right that the Government should look at every area of public spending but I'm hopeful that we, as an industry – operators, local authorities, passenger groups and public transport campaigners – have made a good case.

Bus services are vital for keeping the economy moving and bringing our communities together. I really believe that by working together the industry can contribute to the country's economic recovery and help build a lower carbon future.

The theme of the conference is "All Change for the UK Bus Industry?". I'm tempted to say "What, again?" because this is an industry that just doesn't stand still. Since

John Henkel is director of passenger services of Metro, the local transport executive for West Yorkshire, which has a population of 2.2 million people and accounts for around 3% of UK GDP.

Buses are a key component of the West Yorkshire local transport system, with 195 million journeys is 2009/10. While market research suggests that user satisfaction is high, customers are deserting buses in large numbers, resulting in an overall decline in bus patronage of 21% since 1995. Metro estimates that there will be a loss of 10 million bus passenger journeys in 2010. Although the recession is certainly a factor, this reduction is far higher, proportionally, than the impact of the economic downturn on car or rail trips.

The Department for Transport has set out its concerns with local bus services and has twice promoted reforms – through the Transport Act 2000 and the Local Transport Act 2008. The National Audit Office has concerns about value for money for the taxpayer and the Office of Fair Trading has referred the bus industry to the Competition Commission.

Metro has high regard for the bus operating companies in West Yorkshire and believes that along with district councils, it has made serious and sustained attempts to work with them to make partnerships work since the early 1990s. The award-winning initiatives that have resulted include three ground-breaking guided busway schemes, the largest real-time information system outside London, numerous Quality Bus Corridors and the introduction of FirstGroup's innovative ftr bus.

> **'Conurbations need a high-quality integrated transport system, but the deregulated UK framework is particularly ill-suited to achieving this'**

But still passenger numbers decline.

Major bus operators with strong and charismatic leaders insist that partnership remains the way forward but we need to ask whether the failure of joint initiatives to reverse the decline in bus patronage is the fault of partners.

Metro believes the fundamental issue is that West Yorkshire (and other major conurbations) need a high-quality integrated transport system, and that the deregulated UK framework, based on competition between operators, is particularly ill-suited to achieving this.

Metro has reviewed evidence from a range of sources in forming a view of the need for change and what will happen to bus services in West Yorkshire in the absence of change. Reports from consultants Steer Davies Gleave and NERA Economic Consulting, and Metro's own modelling, indicate that in order to protect profit margins (an entirely legitimate objective) operators are likely to pursue a strategy of raising fares and reducing service levels, with consequent loss of patronage.

This forecast certainly reflects recent behaviour, with examples of fare increases of around 20% over the last three years as well as 5% mileage reductions. Fare increases significantly above inflation, and reductions of

- which way for UK buses?

ad and **John Henkel** set out some of the issues

deregulation there have been more years of major change than there have been years of stability.

In the last ten years alone, there have been two Transport Acts, the introduction of and subsequent major changes to the national concessionary fares scheme, the change from Fuel Duty Rebate to Bus Service Operator's Grant and then changes to BSOG itself, and a new statutory passenger watchdog – plus, of course, the Office of Fair Trading's market study and now the Competition Commission inquiry.

> **The one change we all have to strive for is to make partnerships a success everywhere**

When you add into that mix the wider political and economic context and the effects of long term social and demographic change, including greater car ownership and use, then you really begin to understand that this is an industry where "all change" is normal.

So looking ahead what changes are we likely to see? With a potential cut of 25% in the Department for Transport's budget and local authorities' spending also under pressure I think it's inevitable that we will see further changes in the industry.

Funds to support "socially necessary" bus services are under threat and BSOG – which, it should not be forgotten, only partly rebates fuel duty – is also being scrutinised. In so doing I am sure the DfT will reflect on its own figures which show that without BSOG, fares would be 7% higher and service levels and passenger numbers would be 7% lower. We are also likely to learn the Competition Commission's view of the state of the industry.

Some things never change and the regulation debate continues unabated in some quarters. However, it is difficult to see how some of the Quality Contract ideas could be introduced without a significant increase in council tax, which people will not welcome in this new era of austerity.

The one change we all have to strive for is to make partnerships a success everywhere. We have to work together to defend bus services from public spending cuts and continue to make the case that bus services are vital to economic growth and carbon reduction.

More importantly, we have to work harder together to deliver the quality of services that will hold on to our current passengers and attract more people back to public transport.

The Greener Journeys campaign is a great example of the industry pulling in the same direction and I hope that in the next year it will build momentum to take a billion car journeys off our roads and on to our buses.

Now that's a change we can all sign up to.

Sir Moir Lockhead is chief executive of FirstGroup

service levels of this magnitude, do not indicate a sustainable model for local bus services.

A number of independent commentators, including the Urban Task Force (chaired by Lord Rogers) and Sir Rod Eddington have made recommendations about the potential of franchising, as used throughout much of the developed world, to improve local bus services.

Professor Peter Jones of the University of Westminster, in a paper for the Passenger Transport Executive Group, concluded that a substantial element of the growth in bus use in London could be attributed to factors facilitated by franchised services, rather than those due to particular London circumstances, including funding.

Metro therefore believes that, rather than the threat it is portrayed as by most operating groups, local franchising through Quality Contracts is the best way to ensure that West Yorkshire bus services are at the heart of tomorrow's integrated transport network supporting the prosperity and well-being of the sub-region.

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All Change for the UK Bus Industry?

7 October 2010, ICO Conference, 22 Berners Street, London W1T 3DD

Keynote speaker: Norman Baker MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport

Huge political, demographic and economic changes are forcing fundamental shifts within the UK bus industry (local authorities and private operators). The new ministerial team at the DfT has voiced support for some radical policy proposals particularly on regulation. The Competition Commission is currently examining whether competition is generating excessive profits for operators, the bus service operators grant is being reviewed and the spending cuts programme will also have serious implications for fares and concessions, and carbon reductions.

With so many burning issues needing resolving for the industry, there's never been a better time to attend our annual event to hear how your authority or business may be affected. As ever, the event features the biggest names discussing the biggest questions, including:

- **will regulation triumph over loose partnerships and if so, who pays?**
- **what will happen to the Bus Service Operators Grant?**
- **can concessionary fares survive?**
- **what will funding cuts means for fares and for CO2 reduction?**
- **what are the implications of foreign state ownership of UK bus companies?**
- **are operators really are making excessive profits?**
- **can supported bus services be protected from the spending cuts?**
- **how can smartcards facilitate policy changes and economic efficiencies?**

Confirmed speakers:

- **Sir Moir Lockhead,** Chief Executive, First Group
- **Brian Souter,** Chief Executive, Stagecoach Group
- **David Brown,** MD - Surface Transport, TfL
- **David Leeder,** Director, Transport Investment Ltd
- **Steve Howell,** Head of Transport, Oxfordshire County Council
- **Chris Cheek,** Director, TAS Consultancy
- **Claire Haigh,** Campaign Director, Greener Journeys
- **Andrew Meaney,** Managing Consultant, Oxera

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW at www.transporttimesevents.co.uk
or contact **Grant Poulton** on **0207 828 3804**

Low cost and low carbon – delivering sustainable transport in an age of austerity

This year *Transport Times* is collaborating with Greener Journeys and Low CVP to host the Climate Clinic transport fringe events at all three main political party conferences. The events are all free of charge and are located outside the secure zone so attendees will not require a pass to attend. The events will take as their theme the critical issue of how to deliver sustainable transport in an age of austerity.

Each event will take the form of a high profile debate; speakers include Transport Secretary Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP and Transport Minster Norman Baker MP along with key figures from industry and independent experts.


Norman Baker


David Begg


Philip Hammond

Liberal Democrat conference

Mon 20 September, 18.15-19.30
Climate Clinic at Hamptons by Hilton Hotel, Kings Mill Dock, Hurst Street, Liverpool, L1 8JH
Speakers:
- Norman Baker MP, Transport Minister
- Professor David Begg, executive director of Transport Times (chair)
- Doug Parr, chief scientist and director of policy, Greenpeace UK
- Giles Fearnley, chairman of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK
- David Brown, bus chair, Passenger Transport Executive Group.

Labour conference

Mon 27 September, 12.45-1400
Climate Clinic at the Cube, 113-115 Portland Street, Manchester M1 6DW
Speakers:
- Professor David Begg, former government transport adviser and executive director of Transport Times
- National Journalist invited (chair)
- Mike Cooper, MD, Arriva UK Bus
- Edmund King, President of the Automobile Association
- Stephen Joseph, executive director, Campaign for Better Transport

Conservative conference

Tuesday 5 October, 1800-1915 Climate Clinic at Baskerville House, Centenary Square, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2ND
Speakers:
- Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport
- Professor David Begg, executive director of Transport Times (chair)
- Sir Moir Lockhead, chief executive, FirstGroup
- Doug Parr, chief scientist and director of policy, Greenpeace UK
- Edmund King, president of the Automobile Association

The Climate Clinic is a coalition of the world's leading environment and development organisations, think tanks, public bodies and professional associations demanding political action on climate change. Its party conference fringe programme provides a forum where party leaders, ministers, renowned scientists, opinion formers, environmentalists, low-carbon associations, business leaders and the public come together to debate the issue of climate change. It presents an opportunity to spotlight the solutions and press for urgent action and vigorous political leadership.

Electric vehicles – an important part of the low-carbon mix

Long-term government commitment to provide subsidies is needed to get the electric car market off the ground, says **Greg Archer**

Greg Archer: "Potential to radically reduce the environmental impact of vehicles"
Below: Electric cars such as the Mitsubishi i-MiEV will qualify for a government grant

The Government's recent announcement of support for the purchase of electric cars is a welcome boost for the nascent electric vehicle (EV) industry. The announcement provides £43m of support in 2011, to kick-start the market, subsidising around 8,500 sales with a grant of up to £5,000.

Backed by public funding for R&D, installation of recharging points and vehicle purchase support, the motor industry is gearing up for the commercialisation of electric cars. Mitsubishi's i-MiEV is already on sale, Nissan will launch the Leaf early in 2011 and plug-in range-extended vehicles such as the Vauxhall Ampera will also be available shortly, along with models from a range of other manufacturers.

Electric cars offer the exciting potential to radically reduce the environmental impact of vehicles and address energy security concerns. Although EVs are only zero-carbon at point of use they are also quiet and emit no local air pollutants. Compared with the best conventional vehicles, life-cycle carbon dioxide emissions of EVs are still 30% lower using grid electricity. Recharging EVs overnight will provide an important new market for renewable electricity.

The Climate Change Committee has suggested that by 2020, the UK should aim for 1.7 million electric and plug-in vehicles. Japan has established a similarly demanding target and Spain has targeted a million vehicles by 2014 – although recent reports suggest only 16 electric vehicles have so far been registered this year! Doubts persist whether, even with generous grants, EVs will appeal to large numbers of motorists.

Advances in batteries are improving vehicle range, 60 miles plus now being typical in real-world driving, adequate for most commuting and urban journeys. At current prices of £17,000 to £40,000, EVs are currently an expensive option – particularly as a second car. But if oil prices remain high, and as battery costs fall, the cost of owning an EV will become increasingly attractive, with the electricity costing only £1.50 for a 100-mile trip compared to around £10 in fuel for the average new car.

> **'The strong start made by the UK will only be maintained if there is a significant local early market'**

To entice motorists to switch to EVs a recharging network will also be needed. Some 11,000 charging points at public sites in London, Milton Keynes and the North East will be installed by the end of 2013 and other "plugged-in places" will be announced soon.

Most early adopters of EVs will have off-road parking to recharge at home – adequate for most regular return journeys. But "range-anxiety", the fear that the vehicle will run out of charge, will significantly limit the trips EV drivers are willing to take.

Workplace and public recharging, in car parks and at the roadside, will give confidence to drivers that they can recharge if needed and make better use of their cars. The potential for a fast-charging infrastructure to develop along key trunk-roads (with recharging times of around 20 minutes) will allow vehicles to also be used for longer journeys.

The creation of a market for EVs offers the potential for the UK to develop green, high-tech manufacturing jobs. The commitment of Nissan to build the Leaf in Sunderland alongside its battery manufacturing plant is an excellent start. The UK has considerable specialist capability and could become an important location for this new emerging industry. However, the initial strong start made by the UK is only likely to be maintained if there is a significant local early market.

The coalition's commitment to electric car purchase subsidies is initially more limited and over a shorter timescale than that promised by the previous Labour government. The review of the subsidy programme planned for early 2012 needs to provide a longer-term commitment to give confidence to industry to invest, and persuade consumers to switch to electric alternatives.

Electric vehicles are neither a flash in the pan nor a "silver bullet". Sales of EVs are likely to grow significantly over the next 20 years and they could obtain a significant market share of maybe a third of all vehicles. EVs are, however, unlikely to become the *de facto* vehicle technology, with ultra-efficient conventional vehicles, using biofuels, and ultimately fuel-cell vehicles powered by hydrogen also likely to become available.

Technology alone will not achieve the complete solution and encouraging smarter travel choices and alternatives to travel is also essential. Electric vehicles are an important tool in the battle to decarbonise road transport but will not alone be sufficient.

Greg Archer is managing director of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership, www.lowcvp.org.uk

Changing how we travel – a low cost, low carbon solution

In reducing transport emissions there is an urgent need to encourage a switch from the car, says **Claire Haigh**

In the fight against climate change, transport is one of the toughest challenges. It is the only sector where CO_2 emissions are still rising, and it accounts for more than a fifth of UK emissions.

Nearly 60% of these emissions are from cars, with no sign of them abating. Car traffic is 87% greater than in 1980 and still rising. Purely in terms of the congestion this causes, the cost to the UK is £11bn in GDP each year. Government policy to reduce CO_2 from transport has to date been mainly focused on technology, but the benefits of this will only be felt in the long term – and will do nothing to tackle congestion.

We need a step change. There is an urgent need to focus on behaviour change – in particular encouraging a switch from the car to lower carbon forms of transport. Switching from car to bus and coach travel offers a low cost, low carbon solution that can make a major contribution to the Government's CO_2 reduction targets. Moreover, this modal switch can be achieved very quickly and at a fraction of the cost of other measures.

Greener Journeys has estimated that switching from car to bus or coach for just one journey in 25 could save two million tonnes of CO_2 and would mean one billion fewer car journeys on our roads by 2014. This would reduce carbon dioxide from domestic transport by an additional 50% over the reductions planned by current government policies over the same period. To succeed in our "One Billion Challenge" all we are asking is that people make small changes such as making one extra commuting trip by bus or coach a month.

This autumn we are launching Britain's first ever national consumer marketing campaign to persuade people to get out of cars and on buses. Our goal is to help people identify the specific journeys where taking the bus would make better sense. We are also building partnerships with some of the nation's best-known businesses to promote bus travel to their customers and employees. The success of this work will be closely monitored and used to inform further activity in 2011 and beyond.

> **"We are calling on the Government to allow bus season tickets and travelcards to be paid for from pre-tax income"**

We are also working with the Government and local authorities to accelerate the adoption of a range of pro-bus and coach policies which will make it easier for people to make sustainable transport choices. These include: wider roll-out of smarter choices; more priority measures for buses and coaches; support for park and ride schemes; and better integration of transport policy with land use planning.

Buses still pay an element of tax on the fuel they use. Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) goes some way to helping offset this tax. It is crucial BSOG is retained or local bus services will be put at risk and fares will rise. We are also calling on the Government to allow bus season tickets and travel cards to be paid for from people's pre-tax income, and to encourage salary sacrifice schemes.

Buses are a crucial mode of transport for people on lower incomes, many of whom do not have access to a car. Given the spending challenges facing local and central government spending on buses is very low compared to other transport initiatives and has an excellent cost-benefit ratio.

Promoting modal switch to bus and coach has wider benefits. The UK bus and coach industry directly employs over 170,000 people. Buses and coaches are much safer than cars – a passenger is six times more likely to be fatally injured in a car than on a bus or coach. Better provision of buses and coaches and controlling car demand is fundamental to sustaining the attractiveness of town and city centres. One double-decker bus could take the place of 75 cars on the road.

The stark facts of climate change mean that a more sustainable future will have to involve more intelligent car use. Moreover, making more sustainable choices such as travelling by bus is crucial not only if we are to reduce CO_2 emissions from transport, but also if we are to tackle the challenges of economic growth, health and congestion.

Claire Haigh: "There is an urgent need to focus on behaviour change"
Below: All the people travelling in the cars (left) could fit into one bus (right)

Claire Haigh is campaign director of Greener Journeys, an initiative of the UK bus and coach industry aimed at reducing CO_2 emissions from transport through modal shift from the car. Launched in 2009, it has to date been funded by Arriva, FirstGroup, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach. It now encompasses a wide participation of operators and stakeholders, and aims to widen its membership to include all UK operators. For further information visit www.greenerjourneys.com

ACT Travelwise appoints new head

ACT TravelWise has appointed **Rhiân Davies** as the organisation's new managing director. Her first task will be to oversee the implementation of the major strategic review of the direction of the organisation, its policy base and campaigning activities.

Ms Davies led the National TravelWise Association for four years before orchestrating the successful merger with the Association for Commuter Transport in 2008 to form ACT TravelWise. This created an organisation supporting members in over 350 public and private sector organisations across the UK in their work to promote sustainable travel choices. She said the organisation's strategy review had been built on the policies contained in the coalition government's agreement as well as Norman Baker's brief at the Department for Transport.

Neil Scales, chair of ACT TravelWise, said the new strategy would "show the industry just what smarter choices can achieve, the measures needed to change behaviour and how we can get people to consider alternatives to travel".

Alexandra Jones has been appointed chief executive of the thinktank Centre for Cities. Prior to joining the centre, she led the cities team at the Work Foundation for five years, working with city leaders across the UK.

Before that she worked as private secretary to the permanent secretary at the Department for Education and Skills, and as a researcher at the Institute for Public Policy Research.

She replaces Dermot Finch, who had led the Centre since its inception in 2005.

Andy Brooks has joined Serco Docklands as the new safety & assurance director for the Docklands Light Railway.

Mr Brooks spent the last three years as part of the senior management team on Serco's start-up operation on the Dubai Metro. He has worked for Serco since 2000 in leading safety and assurance roles in the UK and overseas.

He is a chartered member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and has over 25 years' experience within the rail industry.

Alexandra Jones, Centre for Cities

people

Andy Morris, managing director of Stagecoach Light Rail, has left the business after eight years. During that time, he has overseen significant growth in patronage on the Sheffield Supertram system and managed the 10-year operations and maintenance contract for the Manchester Metrolink network. **Tim Shoveller**, managing director of East Midlands Trains, will directly oversee management of the group's light rail operations in addition to his current role.

Stagecoach has also appointed a new operations director for its bus network in central southern England. **Tom Bridge** replaces **Andrew Jarvis** who, after almost four years in the role, has been promoted to managing director of Stagecoach Bluebird and is now based in Aberdeen.

Mr Bridge joins the head office team at Chichester to oversee the day to day operational management of the division's seven depots. He started his career with Stagecoach as a graduate trainee at Sunderland in 1999.

Nigel Barrett, First

Tom Bridge, Stagecoach

Nigel Barrett has been appointed regional managing director for First's South East and Midlands region. Mr Barrett has 39 years' experience in the transport industry. He has worked in UK and overseas, in both bus and rail.

His two most recent job roles have been as chief executive for the East London Bus Group from 2006-2010 and as managing director for Stagecoach North West for six years before that.

Andy Metcalfe has been promoted to the role of revenue and marketing manager by First in South Yorkshire, covering Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster.

Mr Metcalfe has worked for First for five years and is the first product of South Yorkshire's internal management scheme. Prior to joining First, he worked at the specialist public transport consultant TAS Partnership in Preston.

Eurostar has appointed **James Cheesewright** as chief financial officer.

He joins Eurostar from Misys, where he was group vice president for corporate finance, having joined the company in 2006 as business transformation director.

Andy Brooks, Serco