



Department of Transport
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EEH Business Unit
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Monday, 4 October 2021

Dear Baroness Vere,

England's Economic Heartland Strategic Transport Leadership Board - response to Decarbonising Transport - A Better Greener Britain.

In September 2021, the new Strategic Transport Leadership Board for England's Economic Heartland (EEH) met for the first time. The inaugural meeting of the Board was an opportunity for Members to consider DfT's publication of 'Decarbonising Transport - A Better Greener Britain' ('the Plan') and to consider how EEH, a Sub National Transport Body with a clear ambition to decarbonise the transport system can work alongside DfT to deliver your ambitious and world leading Plan.

The EEH transport strategy commits to developing a roadmap for transport decarbonisation in our region embracing the commitment to deliver net zero by 2050 and highlights the aspiration of our partners to decarbonise transport by 2040.

Our Strategic Transport Leadership Board has welcomed your Plan: particularly its recognition that the move to decarbonise the transport system can enable many additional benefits to the country and economy. EEH has long-stated that the changes needed to places, infrastructure, and transport modes in order to enable transport decarbonisation are indeed opportunities for business and residents. Included in this is the opportunity that decarbonisation through changed travel behaviour can bring to the wider environment, such as improving air quality.

DfT should be congratulated on the adoption of world-leading targets for the decarbonisation of new vehicles across all modes (2040): this is a major step forward. However, we also welcome the explicit recognition that this alone will not be enough to reach net-zero or indeed reach the best outcome for our places.

The focus on 'place' and the proposal to link future local authority funding allocations to explicit plans to reduce carbon is a positive step. We collectively recognise the need for further clarity on how this is going to be delivered and EEH is committed to working with you to ensure we provide local authorities with the right level of support, and the right levers to develop place-based solutions to decarbonisation. The development of statutory policy (LTPs

for example) is a time consuming and resource intensive process requiring significant public engagement. In developing LTPs, we should do so with clarity over the policy levers that may be available to us: in both the short and medium term. This an area that we believe DfT needs to provide greater clarity on, as soon as possible.

The Plan explicitly makes a link between planning reform and net zero for transport, particularly focusing on making new developments better regarding delivering positive outcomes for cycling, walking and public transport. While this is very much welcomed, there remains a systemic challenge in funding, policy, and planning infrastructure to support such new approaches to development. Without addressing this issue, it is unlikely the ambitions of the Plan can be realised. This is a systems issue that collectively we should seek to overcome: it will require the engagement of a wide number of stakeholders, including the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Homes England and local developers. With your support and input, EEH would be happy to convene a meeting on behalf of the seven STBs and the DfT.

The EEH Board has also highlighted that the planning of infrastructure that is essential to facilitating decarbonisation of our fleet must be accelerated. Local power distribution networks must be rapidly reinforced to cope with additional demand along with further investment into new low carbon power generation and energy storage. We await the publication of the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) infrastructure strategy with great interest – and reiterate our willingness to support the government in the delivery of an integrated equitable EV charging network.

EEH also welcomes the publication of trajectories for decarbonising the transport system. However, this highlights the need for the DfT to work across national and local government to develop a proportionate approach to roles and responsibilities relating to delivering the reduction of transport carbon emissions. EEH is taking a leadership role in understanding and shaping local decarbonisation trajectories, and options for addressing decarbonisation through place-specific solutions. To do this, EEH is developing a methodology based on the approach published by the Royal Town Planning Institute in January 2021¹. Consistency of measurement is essential across all STBs, albeit the technical methodology applied may differ across the country.

The Plan suggests that local authorities will have responsibility for delivering place-based interventions that address car-based trip demand. If authorities are to address this challenge, there must be adequate and proportionate funding allocated to support such activity and the required alternative transport options.

Through EEH's transport strategy, the region's political and business leadership recognise and that a step-change is required in the way our transport system is delivered. We therefore welcome that plan's acknowledgement that 'we cannot simply believe that zero emission cars and lorries will meet all our climate goals or solve all our problems', and that 'we will use our cars differently and less often'. This is a positive step, and we look forward to the confirmation of specific policies and funding allocations to specifically deliver this aim.

Roads will remain an important part of our transport system. However, regionally and as a country there is a need to embrace the hierarchy in the EEH transport strategy (reflected in the Plan) and rapidly adopt a 'right mode for the right trip approach'. How we use our roads and how often in the future will largely determine the success or failure of the Plan.

We welcome the Plan's commitments to active travel, to developing and improving the bus and regional coach networks, and those to accelerate a rolling programme of rail electrification of existing networks. Modal shift will play a central role in decarbonisation and as such we

¹ <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/june/net-zero-transport-the-role-of-spatial-planning-and-place-based-solutions/>

strongly support the electrification of all new rail infrastructure: particularly the new East/West rail link which whilst unlocking growth. The current plans to open this route using diesel and hybrid traction falls some way short of the aspirations outlined in the Plan and the EEH transport strategy.

While this letter sets out several areas for further work and focus, the EEH Board commends the Plan, and DfT's vision for a decarbonised transport system. We look forward to working closely with DfT Ministers and Officials on the delivery of what we believe can be a defining policy in the nation's work to deliver economy-wide decarbonisation.

I would welcome the chance for us to meet in person so we can discuss how our collective ambitions for decarbonisation can be realised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Wenham', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

CLlr Richard Wenham
Chair - Strategic Transport Leadership Board