

A successful plan must ensure greener transport for all, say green groups

After numerous delays, the publication of the government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan is expected this month. Green groups are calling on the government to put the transport sector firmly on track to net zero by 2050. [1]

Transport is the UK's largest emitting sector, accounting for almost a third (31 per cent) of carbon emissions. Emissions from surface transport have remained the same as they were in 1990, while emissions from aviation have doubled. [2]

Green groups are calling on the plan to cover all modes of transport, including active travel, aviation and freight, with specific interim targets for emissions reductions. A successful plan will signal an end to high spending on new roads, a shift to reducing car use and encouraging low carbon transport, and a halt on airport expansions.

Following the UK's commitment to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 last year, policies to accelerate the transition to zero emissions vehicles are now needed. This must include a zero emissions vehicle (ZEV) mandate on carmakers to ensure more people can switch to cleaner vehicles sooner and an end date for sales of new diesel trucks.

The plan needs to adopt recommendations from the government's climate advisers, the Climate Change Committee's (the CCC), for a 'net zero test' on transport infrastructure decisions to ensure they are in line with our climate targets. [3]

For more information on our recommendations for the government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, see below:

1. Have a clear roadmap to decarbonise transport

- Set out a pathway to decarbonise each mode of transport in line with the UK's target of net zero emissions by 2050.
- Introduce interim targets for emissions cuts, to monitor progress and deliver in the near term.

2. Encourage a shift towards active travel and public transport use

- Set a road traffic reduction target, as part of a wider programme to encourage healthy and sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and public or shared transport.
- A rebalancing of transport funding from major road-building towards healthy, sustainable and inclusive mobility in both urban and rural areas, and as part of the levelling up agenda.

3. Set out a plan to accelerate the adoption of clean vehicles

- Set policy to accelerate the move towards zero emissions cars and vans, including a Zero Emissions Vehicle mandate on carmakers, and new policy and regulation to deliver a comprehensive network of charging infrastructure across the country.
- Set out a plan to decarbonise freight, including through a ban on the sale of new diesel trucks by 2035 at the latest and policy to promote adoption of zero emission trucks over the next decade.

4. Ensure all transport infrastructure investment is compatible with net zero

- Introduce a 'net zero test' for infrastructure decisions to ensure compatibility with net zero, as recommended by the Climate Change Committee. This should include a review of existing infrastructure plans, including government and local plans for road building.
- Ensure low carbon transport is at the heart of the planning reforms, so that the location of new developments reduces car-dependence and supports sustainable travel, and with dedicated funding to deliver public transport and cycling and walking infrastructure for new developments.

5. Set policy to decarbonise shipping and aviation

- Set out an approach to reduce demand for aviation, including by delivering better public information, reflecting carbon costs in ticket prices, reforming taxation, and stopping airport expansion.
- Develop plans to ensure that the aviation industry invests in zero carbon technologies and fuels as well as carbon removals, that it puts in place measures to tackle non-CO2 impacts, and that it is held to account for delivering its commitments.

6. Set a mandate to ensure local delivery of low carbon transport solutions

- Equip local authorities with the powers, resources and funding to deliver on decarbonising transport, including to allocate more road space for walking, cycling and public transport.
- Set clear responsibilities for local authorities and transport bodies to ensure local decisions are compatible with national level targets.

Caterina Brandmayr, head of climate policy at Green Alliance, said:

“From the parent cycling with their child to school to the lorry driver on their way to a job, nobody should be left behind in the transition to a transport system that is fit for the future. This is the opportunity for the government to set out a comprehensive plan to put an end to polluting fossil fuel transport and accelerate the switch to cleaner and healthier transport across all parts of the country.”

Greg Archer, UK director of Transport and Environment, said:

“This plan needs to set the direction towards a cleaner, quieter and more inclusive transport system. A commitment to shift to only use of zero emission vehicles by 2050 is essential. But the government must also level with the public that to avoid dangerous climate change there will also have to be fewer cars, less driving and many fewer flights. This plan could be a milestone in the shift to more sustainable and zero emission transport but will also need to be backed up with a commitment to build fewer roads, no new airport capacity and invest in sustainable alternatives in the autumn spending announcement.”

Crispin Truman OBE, CEO of CPRE the countryside charity, said:

“For too long rural communities have been trapped in a unsustainable transport system, with very little alternative to driving a private car for day to day journeys. To tackle transport carbon emissions in a fair way, while also making our countryside, towns and villages happier and healthier places to live, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan must herald a new era of sustained government investment in vital rural bus services so that everyone has a reliable and convenient alternative to car travel.”

NOTES

[1] ParliamentLive.tv, 24 June 2021, Oral Questions to the Secretary of State for Transport <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/bf17a277-b323-4ebb-b276-91d6de09c617?in=10:01:08>

[2] UK Government national statistics, 2 February 2021, Final UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics: 1990 to 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-to-2019>

[3] Climate Change Committee, 24 June 2021, 2021 Progress Report to Parliament <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Progress-in-reducing-emissions-2021-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>

SIGNATORIES

