

Rt Hon Geoff Hoon MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
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15 November 2008

Dear Geoff

We are writing to thank you for the meeting last week and to follow up on our discussion. We felt it was a useful discussion and better for being an open exchange of views. We support many of the views you expressed and many of the measures the Department is taking – for example moves on rail electrification and promoting electric cars and vans. Many of us have also supported Government moves on road pricing and congestion charging and implementing active traffic management rather than motorway widening.

On climate change, we expressed the view that Government policy needs to be consistent and coherent, and that it is not yet clear how transport will contribute to meeting the targets and budgets contained in the Climate Change Bill. We believe that there is considerable scope for cuts in transport emissions, and analysis some of us have undertaken shows that making these cuts does not have to be difficult or expensive. We would like to emphasise the point we made on this: that your Department needs to consider the carbon impacts of all the decisions it takes, not just the ones that are clearly about the environment and carbon. We gave the example of the Regional Funding Advice (RFA), where the Department has asked regions for their advice by March on spending priorities. Although the advice is supposed to take account of the need to reduce carbon, we have seen few signs of regions taking much notice of this, and instead the same old road schemes are being brought forward at the expense of local transport schemes that might help more people and communities.

Investment packages like these will entrench high carbon behaviour and car dependence: some also have significant local environmental impacts. We think it's important that the Department sends clear signals to the regions and local authorities, through this RFA process and through guidance on Local Transport Plans, that carbon reduction is an overwhelming priority and that this requires the right kind of transport investment which, as you said, gives people choices rather than locking them into car use. Another current issue is the EU new cars regulation: we hope you will ensure that the UK resists weakening of the Commission's proposal and instead supports the full implementation of tough targets, both short and longer term, to ensure that the European car industry makes real progress in cutting emissions and plays a full part in tackling climate change.

On behaviour change, research that our organisations have done shows how important this is, alongside greener technology, in achieving the necessary reductions in carbon emissions as well as other goals. There

is now good evidence that people's travel behaviour can be changed and the Department's own projects such as sustainable travel towns show this. We made the case for going further and faster on this; for example we would like to help Government work with employers to tackle commuting and workplace travel, which DfT figures show accounts for a significant proportion of transport emissions. The National Business Travel Network, which CBT administers for the Department, could be the basis of work here.

We suggested that smaller scale behaviour change projects could help transport contribute quickly to the fiscal stimulus that the Government is seeking. Sustrans will be writing to you separately about this, but it is clear that cycling projects, street design, local public and community transport and also road maintenance can deliver new jobs quickly and reduce carbon emissions, as well as meet the Government's other objectives. By contrast, most big transport infrastructure projects cannot be speeded up and delivered quickly in the same way. We would be keen to work with you and your Department on this.

On air travel, we, like you, are not in the business of telling people they can't fly. We would be keen to engage with you and your officials to look at the full range of measures that could moderate demand for aviation and provide people and businesses with better choices and incentives. Like you, we support the need to seek European and global solutions (in fact some of us are actively involved in lobbying for these, with the UK Government and internationally), but we also think it is essential to look at the options facing the UK now, especially in light of the UK's strengthened climate change targets. In our view it will be extremely difficult and expensive to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions if we continue to allow airports to expand. Videoconferencing, improved rail services, and promotion of domestic tourism are all things upon which we could all presumably agree.

Finally on planning, we emphasised the need to build consensus and involve a wide range of people and groups in developing the national policy statements envisaged in the Planning Bill. Again, we can help the Department do this; we have access to a lot of expertise in ways of involving people in decision-making on infrastructure (and also experience in how not to do it) and would be happy to discuss this with officials.

We were grateful for the meeting and the offer you made of regular further meetings in the future. We will of course disagree on some issues – but we hope that we can work with you and other Ministers and officials to improve the contribution that transport makes to people's lives. We have set out here some options for taking forward the issues we discussed, and look forward to hearing from you on these.

Yours sincerely



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Tim Johnson  
Director, Aviation Environment Federation

Tony Burton  
Director, Strategy and External Affairs, National Trust

Shaun Spiers  
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