

CONSULTATION PAPER

ROADS REVIEW: WHAT ROLE FOR TRUNK ROADS IN ENGLAND?

COMMENTS FROM THE INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Introduction

1. This note contains the comments of the Institution of Environmental Sciences on the above Consultation Paper issued by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in July 1997.
2. We welcome the invitation to contribute on the issues raised by transport and transport related matters. We feel it is important, however, that the various contributions made as part of the Consultation programme for *Transport: The Way Forward* issued by the previous Government, are drawn upon as part of the review of transport policy currently being undertaken. If this is not done there is a danger of overlooking valuable contributions and ideas raised in relation to this general topic only 18 months ago.
3. The structure of our note is as follows. Firstly, a general overview commentary is provided in relation to transport policy. Following on from that the Consultation Paper is dealt with, mainly in relation to specific questions or issues raised in the Paper.

Overview

4. Movement and mobility are important aspects of modern life. The levels of mobility afforded in Britain create considerable freedom and opportunities for individuals, although not without cost to the environment. An appropriate transport system (and attitude towards transport) should adequately reflect these costs, whilst still enabling people to undertake activities important to them and without prejudicing future generations' needs and desires. In addition, individuals need to be fully aware of the implications of their decision to travel, as this is an important requirement before attitudes and behavior can be changed on a substantial and lasting basis.
5. It also has to be recognised, as is the case in the Integrated Transport Policy Consultation Paper, that there are some journeys for which there is no real alternative to the car. Such matters need to be factored into the development of an integrated transport policy. It will also be necessary to clarify what is meant by an integrated transport policy: is it at the operational level, for example, bus timetabling, or is it at a more strategic level incorporating, for example, land use planning. We believe it is the latter focus that should be at the heart of an integrated transport policy, which is where a National Transport Plan would be of assistance, but in any case this will need to be spelt out in the proposed Transport White Paper.
6. Road capacity in particular cannot be significantly increased without environmental costs, either through land take, pollution, congestion or in

quality of life. It is essential, in our view, that it is recognised that for transport to work more effectively and efficiently, as well as for attitudes to transport to be changed that there will need to be an increased role for demand management and market intervention.

7. In order to satisfy the above points we believe it is necessary to tackle directly some fundamental issues. In this context we consider it important to develop the following:-
 - a National Transport Strategy or Plan. This should be an over-arching and policy-driven context for transport in the UK and Europe. The precise details of such a Strategy would obviously need to be carefully worked out, but ought to include targets on topics such as transport related pollution reduction, accidents and safety levels, congestion reduction, and changes in modal split, as well as more controversial issues such as demand constraint. It would also need to ensure compatibility and co-ordination at various levels of activity in the UK, i.e. from local level to regional and national level.
 - to seriously examine, develop and implement a combination of traffic restraint measures and fiscal incentives and disincentives, ideally as part of a National Transport Strategy or Plan. It would be necessary to ensure that funds raised through fiscal measures, such as 'road charging', are safeguarded for public transport, pedestrian and cycling improvements.

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8. Paragraph 2: *Objective of Roads Review*. We agree that the focus of the Roads Review should include determining the role of trunk roads in an integrated transport strategy and establishing a forward investment programme for the trunk road network. In terms of developing a clear and open framework for the appraisal and prioritisation of investment proposals, we would suggest that this framework should also include all relevant attributes, not just those amenable to monetary or quasi-monetary valuation. Without this there is a danger of certain factors being less well integrated into the decision making process.
9. Paragraph 12: *Option appraisal*. Three options are mentioned for responding to increased congestion on trunk roads (better use of existing infrastructure; demand management; and, new infrastructure). Clearly trunk roads are only part of the transport system, and will form part of the integrated transport policy aspired to in the previous Consultation Paper. As part of this it is welcome that the options for responding to increased congestion will be compared with a 'do nothing' situation. However, we also believe that this option appraisal should include a consideration of the impacts of alternative transport related proposals. Without this there is a danger of focusing only on road based 'solutions'.

10. Paragraph 22. *Extent to which new or additional capacity can relieve congestion.* This factor will be particularly important in terms of the appraisal of various transport options. It is vital that both the short and long term impacts of new or additional capacity (particularly in the form of new roads) are fully considered, as well as their local-area and wider-area impacts. Without this there is a danger of perpetuating the 'roads generate traffic' argument.
11. Paragraph 37: *Alternative means of solving transport problems.* An effective way in which alternative means of solving transport problems can be incorporated into the appraisal process, would be for such options to be considered as a formal requirement as part of any evaluation. Clearly it would be important to avoid both 'token' or 'time-wasting' options being developed, but such a requirement would ensure a variety of possibilities for solving transport problems are explored.
12. Paragraph 41: *Transfer of Trunk Road responsibilities.* Transferring trunk roads to local authorities or regional bodies, or vice versa, should be a local/regional matter in discussion with central Government. However, it is vital that such transfers are appropriately incorporated into the various regional guidance and structures in place or currently being considered.