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Marcus R Wigan



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Transport Planning Society

One Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AA

PRESS RELEASE

12 July 2002

Embargoed until 06.00 hours Monday 15th July

Transport Professors Warn of 'Unrealistic Expectations' in Transport Policy

Herewith is an open letter to the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling MP, signed by 28 UK transport professors in their personal capacities, raising their shared concerns about current transport policy. The signatories constitute the majority of the UK transport professors with whom we are in touch. A number of others expressed their support for the general principles of the letter, while not wishing to sign for personal reasons. The letter therefore reflects a significant and substantial body of concern over policy within the transport profession.

All the signatories would want the letter to be seen as a friendly and constructive communication intended to continue and raise the level of debate about policy and to draw to the Secretary of State's attention some key issues at a time when he will be reviewing and potentially revising the 10 Year Plan for transport.

The letter has been co-ordinated by the Transport Planning Society (TPS). TPS, the professional focus for transport planning issues in the UK, is a Society to facilitate, develop and promote best practice in transport planning and provide a focus for dialogue between all those engaged in it, whatever their background or other professional affiliation. A key aim of TPS is to confront and generate debate surrounding contemporary issues in transport planning and Chair of TPS, Prof Glenn Lyons, believes the concerns raised in the letter merit attention and close consideration both by the Department and the wider transport profession. The Secretary of State is being invited to respond to the letter through TPS. In the spirit of encouraging professional debate, the professors' letter is being made public with copies being sent to the main specialist writers/broadcasters in this field. Details and a copy of the letter will also be posted on the TPS website (<http://www.tps.org.uk>).

The next stage in the TPS's own debate is an evening meeting being held in London at the Institution of Civil Engineers at 6.30pm on 22 July entitled 'Relaunching the Government's Ten Year Plan for Transport: Fundamental Revision or Cosmetic Adjustment?'. The speaker for the evening will be Professor Phil Goodwin and this is expected to be an ideal opportunity for TPS members and other professionals to further debate the concerns raised in the professors' letter. An invitation to the Secretary of State and/or his officials to attend the event has been extended.

Supported by the following Institutions:- Chartered Institute of Transport, Institution of Civil Engineers, Institution of Highways and Transportation and Royal Town Planning Institute.

www.tps.org.uk

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Prof Glenn Lyons (Chair of the Transport Planning Society) has been responsible for coordinating this expression of view by many of the most senior academics specialising in transport.

Prof Phil Goodwin (University College London) is the initiator of the letter and will be speaking to the subject of the letter at a TPS evening meeting on 22 July 2002 in London. Enquiries from those wishing to attend (free of charge) should be directed to Ann Scannell, Engineering Division, Institution of Civil Engineers, 1 Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA. Telephone 020 7665 2229 or Fax 020 7799 1325 or on email Ann.Scannell@ice.org.uk.

The signatories include experts in traffic, safety, engineering, economics, geography, psychology, political science and other disciplines. All of them have been advisers to Ministers or Parliamentary Committees, or have carried out research commissioned by the Department for Transport and other public bodies, and industry.

If members of the press would like to make contact with specific signatories in their own area please contact Glenn Lyons.

Glenn Lyons: Telephone: work - 023 8059 4657; home - 01980 597312
email G.Lyons@soton.ac.uk

Phil Goodwin: Telephone: work - 020 7679 1580; home - 020 7628 7824
email goodwin@transport.ucl.ac.uk

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The Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

12 July 2002

Dear Secretary of State,

We are university professors specialising in the field of transport, and share society's widespread dissatisfaction with its present quality, efficiency, equity and environmental impacts. We write to express our concerns about some unrealistic expectations about how to make effective progress on these problems.

Many politicians would like to be advised that a programme of selective road building, together with promised improvements to alternative methods of transport, will be sufficient to improve travel conditions, without the need for traffic restraint. The evidence is that if traffic growth continues at the rates of recent decades, such a package will not in practice achieve its intended effects.

Investment in public transport infrastructure, and provisions for walking and cycling, are indeed necessary, but in congested conditions they will also need priority allocation of road space, without which a genuinely attractive service will not be possible. People will only choose to make significant changes in their travel choices if there is a recognised and substantial advantage in doing so.

We have a range of different views about the scale of road building that should be undertaken - some of us advocating more, and others less, than is currently planned. But we all agree that efficient road planning depends strongly on a clear understanding that there will have to be active policy intervention to manage the demand for road space at congested times and places. Without this, the benefits of any infrastructure expansion would be substantially eroded by extra traffic, disappointing car drivers and non-drivers alike.

One much-discussed method of managing demand is to charge users of all methods of transport for the full costs that each journey imposes on society as a whole. Some of us have carried out research over many years on the benefits of such an approach. Potential benefits include some reduction in congestion and environmental damage, and the provision of funds which should, in full or part, contribute to transport improvements. We have also studied the social and political reasons why such charges may be rejected, or delayed - but we stress that in that case, other methods of influencing the demand for travel become more necessary and more urgent, not less. These methods range from detailed street design to long term land use planning, and there is much international evidence on how to make them successful.

We are not elected politicians, and we certainly do not consider ourselves as uniquely qualified to define the objectives of a transport policy. But we have gained considerable experience in studying what will work, and what will not. Policies on infrastructure, operations and prices must be consistent with each other, if they are to offer some chance of making things better instead of just accumulating long term problems.

Yours sincerely,



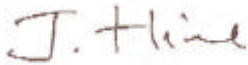
Richard Allsop
Professor of Transport Studies,
University College London



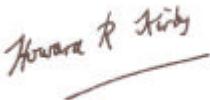
Christiane Bielefeldt
Visiting Professor for Strategic Transport
Management,
Napier University



Margaret Grieco
Professor of Transport and Society,
Napier University



Julian Hine
Professor of Transport,
University of Ulster



Howard Kirby
Professor of Transport Studies,
Napier University



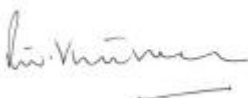
Glenn Lyons
Professor of Transport,
University of the West of England



Mike McDonald
Professor of Transportation Engineering,
University of Southampton



Austin Smyth
Professor of Transport Economics,
Napier University



Roger Vickerman
Jean Monnet Professor of European Economics,
University of Kent at Canterbury



Chris Wright
Professor of Transport Management,
Middlesex University



David Bannister
Professor of Transport Planning,
University College London



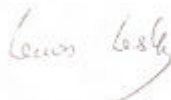
Stuart Cole
Professor of Transport Studies,
University of Glamorgan



Kerry Hamilton
Professor of Transport Studies,
University of East London



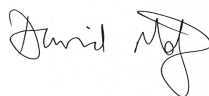
David Jeffery
Visiting Professor,
University of Southampton



Lewis Lesley
Professor of Transport Science,
Liverpool John Moores University



Mike Maher
Professor of Transportation Engineering,
Napier University



David Metz
Visiting Professor,
London School of Hygiene & Tropical
Medicine



Stephen Stradling
Professor of Transport Psychology,
Napier University



Peter White
Professor of Public Transport Systems,
University of Westminster



Professor Margaret Bell
Professor of Transport and Environmental Pollution,
University of Leeds



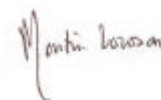
Phil Goodwin
Professor of Transport Policy,
University College London



Peter Hills
Professor of Transport Engineering,
University of Newcastle



Peter Jones
Professor of Transport Policy and Behavioural
Analysis,
University of Westminster



Martin Lowson
Professor of Advanced Transport,
University of Bristol



Tony May
Professor of Transport Engineering,
University of Leeds



Chris Nash
Professor of Transport Economics,
University of Leeds



John Urry,
Professor of Sociology,
Lancaster University



Marcus Wigan
Professor of Transport Systems,
Napier University