



# OUTMODED: A CALL FOR SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY



**KEITH TAYLOR** GREEN PARTY  
MEP FOR THE SOUTH EAST



## FOREWORD KEITH TAYLOR MEP

**The UK is legally bound to reduce its greenhouse gases by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050, and to meet European standards for air pollution which are informed by the World Health Organisation.** We have agreed alongside the international community to keep within two degrees of warming on pre-industrialisation levels. But with each year, each reporting cycle, each round of austerity, and each new investment in maintaining a fossil-fuelled transport system, we get further away from meeting our commitments as transport pulls further away as the most polluting sector.

As a Member of the European Parliament's Environment and Public Health and Transport Committees, I have been working to make our systems safer and more sustainable. The Government has all the necessary tools to transform the UK transport system into a more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable one. Not to do so is a choice rather than a necessity.



We can't build our way out of the failings of the transport infrastructure, or bail out the failing companies to save face, or pander to the powerful ones because that's the way it's always been. We need bold, brave, visionary decisions which will deliver a cleaner, fairer future. Looking across the board, it is clear that the UK does not have transport policy capable of meeting the future needs of society. In many cases, it is crumbling before our very eyes. Outlining some of the major issues with the current situation, investment decisions and the plans being implemented, the mobility crisis is starkly obvious.

## THE ISSUES

### AIR POLLUTION



**In the UK, 86% of monitored areas currently exceed EU air pollution limits. Poor air quality is linked to respiratory difficulties, heart disease, and Alzheimer's amongst other things. A public health crisis that disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable. Almost 800 lives are lost weekly and it costs taxpayers approximately £20bn annually.**

Road transport pollution doesn't just come from diesel exhaust fumes, but also from braking and tyres. Therefore the Government's plan to accelerate vehicle fleet turnover and invest in new 'zero emission' vehicles is flawed - they will still have brakes and tyres and will still get stuck in traffic. We need fewer not newer cars.

Instead of holding industry to account when they continued to dodge and cheat vehicle standards, the Government has consistently incentivised diesel vehicle purchases and has failed to acknowledge the most effective policy tools - banning fossil-fuelled vehicles from urban areas and diesel scrappage schemes.



## AVIATION AND AIRPORT EXPANSION

**Aviation is a top ten global polluter and not accounting for any airport expansion, emissions from the sector are already expected to use up more than two-thirds of the UK's carbon budget by 2050.**

Heathrow is already one of the UK's largest sources of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, expansion will prevent the UK from keeping to the upper 2°C limit for global average temperature rise agreed in the Paris accord. A new runway will worsen the local and national air quality crisis and expose local residents to many unnecessary impacts. The Government cannot support the unabated growth of the aviation sector or encourage the development of Heathrow as a 'hub' for passing through, purely for economic gain. It is just simply too deleterious and short-sighted to ever make sense.



## ROAD BUILDING

**Road building projects induce rather than reduce congestion. Never-ending and destructive road widening is simply not the answer to our transport woes, nor is investing in new swathes of tarmac ripping through the countryside in the name of progress. More capacity equals more traffic.**

Across the South East, from the A27 to the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, billions are being pumped into outdated infrastructure projects that are doomed to fail, even on their own terms, when investment in less costly and more effective sustainable mobility initiatives are so desperately needed. The idea that this investment is best spent perpetuating and promoting the road, when other modes are more viable in the long-term and desperate for funding is incomprehensible.

Committed to a major road-building scheme, the likes of which has not been seen for decades, the Conservatives are looking backwards in the hopes of building Britain out of a problem that requires bold political will and genuine innovation.



## RAIL

**The rail network holds such promise. But the current system is failing. It is in such a sorry state, with elemental flaws, it is in real danger of demise.**

The recent chaos caused by the timetable change is one example; handing Virgin Rail and Stagecoach £2bn for their failures is another. It is a travesty that in these circumstances, the rail companies inflict extortionate fare hikes on passengers annually. The rail network needs renationalising, but alone this is insufficient. Because it needs to be shepherded by a Government with a more long-term and logical rail strategy.

HS2 is a terrible investment. Upgrading existing infrastructure and reconnecting obsolete lines and linking regional services should be prioritised. And the issue of electrification should be a no-brainer. Knowing all that we know about the environmental and health risks associated with diesel emissions, we cannot and should not be building diesel railways.

## FREIGHT



**We should also be using our railways more efficiently and providing capacity to move more, not less, freight by rail.**

The EU targets to shift 30% of long-distance road freight to other modes (rail and waterways) by 2030 and 50% by 2050 are an opportunity to take more traffic from the roads. But to do so requires a long-term commitment to improving service quality, lowering costs (to create a level playing field between modes) and increasing transport capacity.

Similarly, to help tackle the public health crises and alleviate congestion in our towns and cities, we need to be supporting more non-motorised forms of distribution. We need to keep freight out of town, with consolidation centres, and we need clean ways to transport goods on the first/last part of their journey.

## UKEU

## BREXIT

**The fundamental unanswered questions that relate to the UK's relationship with the EU post-Brexit and the impact that any arrangements will have is also of particular concern for the UK's transport future.**

Much attention has been paid to low cost airlines and air travel to date, but there are many other issues that require consideration.

Ejecting Britain from the Customs Union would require a new infrastructure which will see 185,000 businesses having to create an estimated 300 million extra customs documents every year. And that means delays. The Port of Dover has already calculated that every two minutes extra spent dealing with a new customs system will result in a 27km tailback. While Ministers continue to make policy based not on the evidence but on blind ideology, Dover and much of Kent must prepare, as best it can, for the prospect that it will be turned into a semi-permanent lorry park post-Brexit.

From these Customs Union decisions that will affect constituents based in port towns and surrounding communities, to questions about who will hold the Government to account over air quality standards as urban areas continue to choke, the implications of Brexit on transport are huge. Passenger and workers' rights, interoperability between networks, these are all huge areas of concern, yet there is still no clarity about the impacts or responses to them as time ticks on.



We have all the knowledge and tools at our disposal to genuinely transform the transport network into a better, cleaner and healthier one.

Below are some of the measures that would genuinely improve the current state of our transport network and transform our mobility in the longer term to be cleaner, safer and healthier – if only our leaders had the will to implement them.

## BETTER INTEGRATION ACROSS SECTORS, LONG-TERM

Transport isn't just a transport issue, it cuts across so many other areas, from health to energy via planning – if we want holistic solutions, we need better understanding, collaboration and public engagement.

## LESS ATTENTION ON SPECIFIC MODES

If we start thinking about mobility and stop thinking about modes, solutions become easier to realise. Multi-modal journeys better reflect how people actually travel and the provision offered should also be considered in the same way.

## LEVEL PLAYING FIELDS

Removing subsidies for road freight and aviation and making the alternatives more viable, would help shift to rail and water and allow for them to work together more. Without fluidity and provision for all, road remains king.

## SWITCH FUEL, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY

Fossil fuels need to be phased out. Investing in alternative fuels is certainly important, but it cannot be relied upon to solve everything – we need to change the system too.

## FACILITATE MODAL SHIFT

Investment in walking, cycling, public transport and shared mobility is required – we cannot expect

people to leave their cars behind when there is no other option – alternatives need to be attractive, viable, accessible and interconnected.

## REPLACE THE NEED TO TRAVEL

From telecommuting to shopping, online web-based services have revolutionised business and 'smart' integration has much more potential.

## DON'T FORGET THE RURAL

Rural communities require sustainable mobility just as much as urban populations. So much attention is given to urban solutions, but it is important not to neglect provision for those in the countryside.

## THINK ABOUT THE FIRST/LAST MILE

Non-motorised passenger and cargo travel can make urban areas so much healthier and cleaner for the shortest of trips currently taken by cars, vans and lorries.

## BE AMBITIOUS

Fundamental change is required to deliver these measures. More pilot projects and new technologies have a place, but systemic support for societal change is fundamentally important. Some measures may not be popular, but long term they are needed. Road pricing, banning polluting vehicles, diesel scrappage schemes, and charging clean air zones are some others – these are the measures that will realise the shift towards cleaner mobility.

# CASE STUDIES

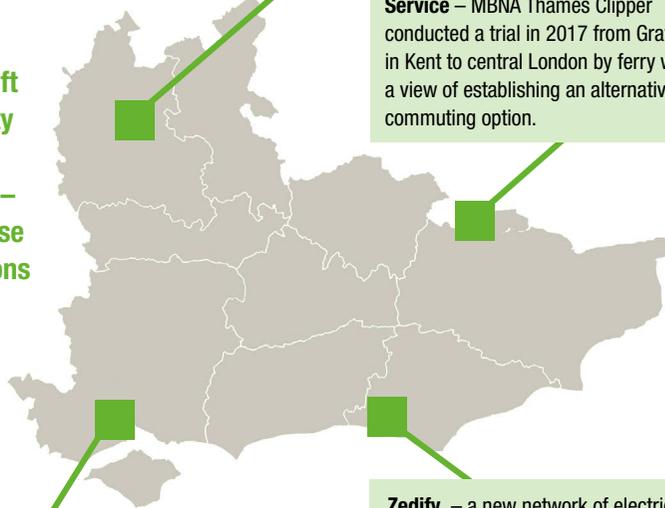
**I have seen first-hand from my role on the Transport Committee of the European Parliament that there is so much positive transformation taking place across Europe to learn from.**

**Sweden** is leading the way in ambitious future-thinking policy. From recently coining the term '*mobilitist*' in policy planning – to encourage people to ditch reliance on cars and the limitations of single modes – to investment in innovative electric roads, to granting local authorities powers to enforce more stringent vehicle restrictions, Sweden is starting to take these bold next steps towards a transformed mobility system.

Similarly, **Estonia** has announced the world's largest free public transport network. Building on the success of Tallinn's experiences of fareless public transit since 2013, 11 of the country's 15 regions are now providing free transport.

And in **Barcelona**, large-scale city pedestrianisation is being developed in a move to better link planning with mobility considerations. The so-called Superblocks, 40-acre, pedestrian-first environments have been in development since 2016 with the aim of reducing private car and moped use by 21%.

**There is also a raft of positive activity occurring across the constituency – pockets of promise that these solutions can be effective.**



**PickMeUp OXFORD** is an on-demand ride-sharing minibus service. Collecting passengers from a 'virtual bus stop', the intelligent software works out the best way to take passengers to their chosen destinations.

**GRAVESEND Thames Commuter Service** – MBNA Thames Clipper conducted a trial in 2017 from Gravesend in Kent to central London by ferry with a view of establishing an alternative commuting option.

As part of the EU-funded **CityLab** project, **SOUTHAMPTON Sustainable Distribution Centre** operated by Meachers Global Logistics and supported by Southampton City Council was established to reduce freight impact and test the viability of freight consolidation opportunities.

**Zedify** – a new network of electric bike and trike couriers that take items the 'last mile' from city-centre depots to homes and businesses in a growing number of towns, including **BRIGHTON**.

In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was clear that ‘aggressive’ and ‘sustained’ efforts were needed on transport emissions to decarbonise the transport sector. Action in the UK has been neither ‘aggressive’ nor ‘sustained’. Four years later the transport picture looks bleaker than ever, and not just for the climate.

Ultimately, we need to be moving away from private cars, towards more, not less public transport. We need a Government that acknowledges this and is supportive of local authorities in their efforts to promote walking and cycling, providing the relatively modest investment that improving this infrastructure would require. We need freight delivery to switch away from the roads and we need smarter distribution systems to ensure that trips are minimised. We have to think more about end-to-end journeys, sustainable mobility and low carbon, less polluting and truly interconnected networks.

A functioning transport system isn’t just about promoting economic growth; safeguarding the environment and health cannot be secondary considerations shoehorned in as an afterthought, whereby the impacts of all this new investment in the status quo can be costed out. Social equity and environmental protection need to be policy priorities. They simply aren’t under the current Government.

## WHAT THE GREENS WOULD DO:

- **Return the railways to public ownership and re-regulate and invest in buses**
- **Make all public transport fully accessible and step-free with a phase-in of free local public transport for young people, students, people with disabilities, and older people**
- **Invest in regional rail links and electrification of existing rail lines, rather than wasting money on HS2 and the national major roads programme**
- **Cancel all airport expansion and end subsidies on airline fuel**
- **Invest in low traffic neighbourhoods and safe, convenient networks of routes for walking and cycling**
- **Help end the air pollution public health crisis by increasing incentives to take diesel vehicles off the roads**

**KEITH TAYLOR** GREEN PARTY MEP FOR THE SOUTH EAST

• [keithtaylormp.org.uk](http://keithtaylormp.org.uk) • [keithtaylor@greenmeps.org.uk](mailto:keithtaylor@greenmeps.org.uk) • [@GreenKeithMEP](https://www.facebook.com/GreenKeithMEP)