

# *A Drive in the Country?*

Examining the problems of recreational  
travel and working towards solutions



COUNTRYSIDE  
RECREATION  
NETWORK

Proceedings from a workshop held at Aston Business School, Birmingham  
on 1 November 1994

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# *A Drive in the Country?*

Proceedings of a workshop held at Aston Business School

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August 1995

# TRENDS, PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES TO POLICY

Tony Cross

University of Wales, College of Cardiff

## INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by saying a few words about my involvement with transport and my recent work with the Countryside Council for Wales and other authorities with responsibility for rural transport.

My principal research and consultancy has been in public transport, initially monitoring the impacts of coach and bus deregulation and recently undertaking strategic transportation studies. Much of my work has been in urban areas, although I have increasingly focused on needs in rural areas and the issues associated with transport in the countryside.

It has become apparent to me that many of the methods used by transport planners in urban areas could be usefully employed in the countryside and I have been fortunate in being able to put this into practice with my work for the Countryside Council for Wales. I believe that it is crucial in developing policy on transport—whether for recreational or for other purposes—to speak in a language which is understood and accepted by both highway and public transport planners. I would guess that this will become easier as the debate surrounding the report by the Royal Commission on the Environment gathers momentum.

The first message of my talk is that in seeking to address the problem of recreational travel in the Countryside we should not re-invent the wheel. There are plenty of good and useful methods for transport planning in urban areas which can be borrowed and amended for the countryside.

Bearing this in mind I would like to set the scene in three ways:

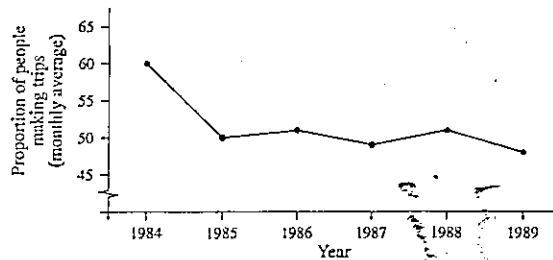
- i Define the problem
- ii Establish responsibility  
(and power)
- iii Discuss the opportunities and threats.

## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

### Dispelling Myths

- Visitor numbers are in fact *stagnant* and even *fell* during the 1980s. There has however been a big increase in visitor numbers at particular locations.
- Rural road congestion is *not* a general problem. It is very *seasonal*, and tends to be highly *localised*. It has had no impact on average speeds because the design speed of highways is often relatively low in rural areas (40 to 60 miles per hour).
- It is possible to provide public transport in rural areas. Good examples are the Devon and Cornwall rail strategy, the Sherpa Bus service in Snowdonia (which is becoming commercial, and the public transport service in Gwynedd, which generally has excellent coverage and frequency.

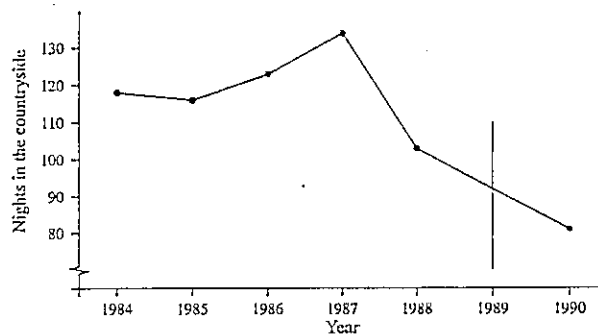
### The Proportion of People making Trips per Summer Month



Source: Broom, 1991

### British Tourism Nights in the Countryside

These are most susceptible to the state of the economy and they mirror growth and recession



Source: Broom, 1991

Source: BATS 1 Source: UKTS  
Data Not Available

*Big increase in visitor numbers at particular locations*

### Victims of success

It is true that there is a clear growth in the number of visitors at *particular sites*. This means that local traffic congestion is bad but at the same time provides an opportunity for public transport which performs best where there are specific origins and destinations.

- Benson and Willis (1990) report a 3 fold increase in visits to National Trust properties between 1980 and 1987 and major increases in visits to country parks, created by commercialisation and marketing.
- In Dartmoor, visitor numbers have risen from around 7.5 million in the 1980s to 10 million in the 1990s.
- An increase in off road cycle use has brought local problems.  
(Cycle sales in the last 20 years have quadrupled).

### Wrong kinds of visitors on the roads

- Between 1987 and 1994 road traffic on non-urban roads increased by one third.
- Further evidence (Curry 1994) shows that
  - i 54% of those taking part in countryside recreation are engaged in sightseeing
  - ii 59% of day trippers in Wales go to inland towns and cities and 11% go to inland villages
  - iii 42% of day trippers are families
  - iv 57% come from ABC1 groups (SEG)

- v According to an RAC survey, 80% of country visitors arrive by car, 80% of visits are day trips made from home

The implications of this are:

- It is not easy to get these categories out of their cars and onto public transport. Families, for example, tend to find cars so much more convenient for carrying all the trappings of a 'day out'.
- Day trippers don't benefit the local economy as they tend to spend less than those who are on holiday or staying in the area.

Before concluding here it is worth noting that a large proportion of traffic growth is due to *commuting* from rural areas and also to these simply *driving through!*

### **Fighting on Many Fronts**

There are many issues which need to be addressed:

- Too many cars in specific locations
- Too few visitors in other locations
- Some evidence in Wales of a greater spread of visits throughout the year and a reduction of the traditional seasonal peaks. Occupancy rates in self catering have increased in the last 4 years at the shoulder of the season (June and September).

### **Building Roads and Saving Duckponds**

English Nature estimated that the Government roads programme 'Roads to Prosperity' would affect 160 sites of Special Scientific Interest. It is further estimated that 800 archaeological sites or heritage sites will be affected.

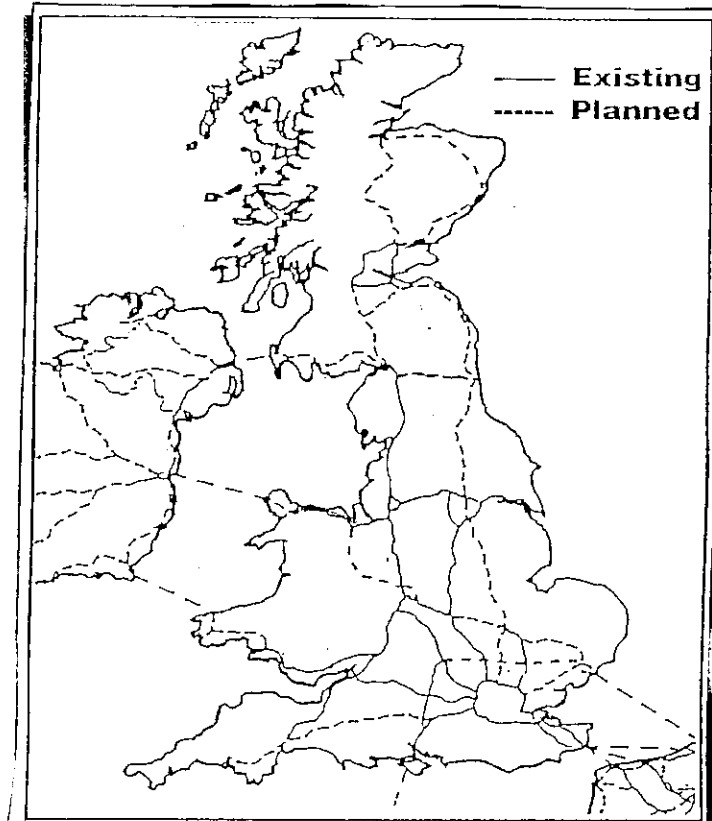
If we lose even some of these the pressure on those remaining will increase. So *why* does the Government choose to align roads through SSSI's and similar areas? The reason is that there are *no people* living there which implies a *low price* for the land as it is *difficult to value*. New roads or improved roads in rural areas encourage developers to acquire land in open areas and this in turn encourages long distance commuters. The *number of trips* in the UK has not risen nearly so fast as the *number of distance commuters*.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England reports that an area of countryside the size of Norwich, Exeter and Southampton combined is lost to concrete *every* year. 120,000 tonnes of rock and gravel are needed for each 1km of new road. This in itself is eroding the base of possible visitor sites as well as creating HGV traffic.

### **Speeding to a Successful Europe**

Investment in transport infrastructure is seen as the means of both achieving a single market and assisting peripheral areas. Plans have been published for a trans-European road and rail network involving high speed links. The development of this network is on-going and the proposed road links are shown on the map below.





### *The Trans-European Road Network*

The impacts of such a network are far reaching;

- The network will open up or make more accessible current markets, which can help some areas by bringing them within easier reach of tourists etc. *but*
- The network will bring greater numbers within reach of key attractions. For example the A55 improvements in North Wales have already put several million people within one and a half hours of the Snowdonia National Park by road, thus further undermining the competitiveness of public transport.
- The impacts of new road alignment will destroy the environment.

### **Killing the Goose**

Greater use of the countryside causes greater environmental impacts. Outdoor recreation often entails an appreciation of the landscape and a peaceful environment. Too great a pressure will destroy these, and thus the resource people wish to access in the countryside will be lost. Everyone is familiar with the environmental impacts of road traffic, particularly noise, air

pollution and road run-off. In OECD countries 110 million people are exposed to traffic noise of 65dba or more.

Other impacts resulting from countryside recreation include water pollution, visual intrusion, erosion etc. Upland areas are particularly affected by air pollution which is often generated in the cities. Snowdonia is a particular blackspot.

Another important aspect is the belief that any area that restricts use of the car will reduce its own competitiveness with other areas. In our towns and cities arguments prevail about road pricing because it will reduce economic competitiveness of an area. So too with hard pressed countryside areas that need to exploit rural tourism; concern that making access difficult will strangle the goose. Maybe a national policy on traffic management is required, along with promotion of public transport. This is something which the RAC have been calling for.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROBLEM

### Sustainable Mobility and Greenhouse Gases

- One outcome of the Rio Conference/Agenda 21 is the attempt to stabilise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Some agreements were reached which affect transport policy in the long term.
- The Common Transport Policy is subtitled 'Framework for Sustainable Mobility'. Although full of contradictions it does acknowledge the importance of public transport and the need to protect our environment.
- The White Paper 'Towards Sustainability' contains the following table which identifies the authorities responsible for various measures to reduce the use of private cars.

#### Sustainable Transport: Whose Responsibility?

MEASURES	ACTORS
LAND USE PLANNING	MS/LA
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT	MS / LA and EC
INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGING	MS and EC
TECHNICAL MEASURES (vehicles)	INDUSTRY
REGULATIONS	EC and MS
FISCAL INCENTIVE	EC and MS
DRIVER INFO AND EDUCATION	LA / MS / EC and NGO's
IMPROVED PUBLIC/COLLECTIVE TRANSPORT	LA / MS and EC
DISCOURAGEMENT OF ROAD TRAFFIC IN CITIES	LA and MS
DEVELOPMENT OF FISCAL AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES	LA and MS

EC: European Community  
LA: Local Authorities

NGO: non-Government Organisation  
MS: Member States

## **'The Great Car Economy': Government Policy at the Crossroads**

Central Government is characterised by some tension between the DoE and the DoT. The result is not a *transport* policy, but a *roads* policy.

Perhaps this is something which may be changed by the report of the Royal Commission. Currently around 60-70% of transport expenditure is on highways. Planning Policy Guidance Notes 12, 13 and 15 provide some evidence that the DoE is modifying the extreme roads policy which the Government has been following. These conflicting policies provide a confusing picture of the Government's intentions towards public transport. The Government is now in the process of privatising railway services which may have a profound effect upon some rural parts of the network. At the same time the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) has produced a report suggesting that new roads generate more traffic. The Government is suppressing the results. The Package Approach to funding capital schemes is making it easier for local authorities to invest in public transport schemes.

### **Local Government: The Search for a Compromise**

Local government has a mixed bag of responsibilities, among which are Structure and Local Plans, keeping open rail alignments, development control, strategic and local roads, road safety, socially necessary public transport, concessionary fares, National Park issues, economic development.

Local Authorities have to reconcile these conflicting cultures.

- Devon has led the way to some extent, with the Dartmoor Traffic Management Strategy.
- Snowdonia National Park is developing a Transport Policy with collaboration between a number of agencies.

### **Quangos**

The Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and similar agencies are able to take a wider view. eg. the Tourism Strategy developed by the Wales Tourist Board acknowledges the need to protect the environment *and* develop opportunities. These agencies could assist by carrying ideas and schemes from one area to another. Maybe there are some issues associated with accountability.

### **The Great British Public**

There is a role for them through consultation, user group representation etc.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS**

### **Economic Development**

Economic development is a double edged sword.

Re-opening rail services creates new jobs eg. the East Lancashire Railway created 170 jobs. In the Conwy Valley, the Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog line has been re-opened as a tourist attraction. Cycle hire facilities have been introduced at Castleton on the Middlesborough to Whitby line, and a restaurant at Corbride on the Newcastle to Carlisle line. Opportunities are presented for a range of guided walks/village facilities. It is repeatedly shown that there exists enterprise and creativity within rural communities where they are given an opportunity.

Economic development can also pose threats, when tourism is pursued at any price or when competition to win visitors means that car restraint is not possible.

## **Rail Privatisation**

Rail privatisation can encourage genuinely local initiatives such as the TARKA Line in Devon. Some resistance amongst National Rail operators has been evident to such local initiatives. Locally negotiated agreements involving collaboration with local authorities and agencies will continue to be feasible but more difficult under privatisation. Rural lines may be regarded as a marginal limb of franchise.

The service needs integration with other parts of the rail network, through integrated ticketing/timetable and information to ensure that local lines play a full part in national networks.

## **Public Opinion**

This is moving towards accepting restraint on cars and improving public transport. Surveys continually suggest that people want to see more public transport. 40% of the passengers on the newly opened Robin Hood line in Nottinghamshire *have access to a car* for that journey. We have constructed a lifestyle around private car use and anyone who believes that this can be altered overnight is a real optimist. Even in countries where public transport is much better than our own, ownership has continued to increase

## **Sustainability**

The debate surrounding sustainability has moved to a discussion of carrying limits and is encouraging us to think about what levels are acceptable. For example the proportion of trips by different modes. The Royal Commission has argued for an increase in the proportion of trips by public transport from 12% in 1993 to 20% in 2025.

## **Collaboration**

Collaboration between Local Authorities and agencies is definitely the way forward but what impact will Local Government Reorganisation have?

## **Package Approach**

There is an opportunity to combine highways and public transport spending. This new approach is being used in Devon for Dartmoor. LEADER and Intereg funding for Europe may also assist in altering the balance of expenditure between highways and public transport.

**But** The Government may cut roads expenditure without increasing support for public transport. The Public Services Obligation Grant for Railways is set to reduce over the next 3 to 4 years.

The Government is reducing the roads programme, but privatisation may allow the Government to transfer the 'blame' for road building to the private sector.

## IN CONCLUSION



I've always thought it curious that traffic engineers inform us that there might be falling rocks! How are we supposed to interpret this information?

- Stop and turn back?
- Drive on slowly so that if a rock does hit us the impact speed will be minimised?
- Drive as fast as possible to reduce the chance of being in the area when a rock falls?

Transport policy in the Countryside faces similar choices, and I would like to conclude with the following cautionary notes:

- Let's not get the problem out of perspective—without the roads programme in full, traffic growth will be limited by road capacity. Attempts to manage the growth might prolong the agony.
- We have to *proceed* within the current institutional framework—this means deregulation, privatisation of rail services, and the acceptance that private cars will continue to play a key role in travel with the countryside.
- We should move towards a consistent approach to recreational travel in the countryside beginning with National Parks because they have got delineated boundaries.

We must explore ways in which public transport can play a full role in accessing the countryside and finally we must be realistic. In urban areas transport planners are working to increase public transport's share of the travel market by 6% over a typical ten year period. In rural areas where the problems of congestion and environmental damage are less apparent something below 6% will be realistic.

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## MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING OF RECREATIONAL TRANSPORT SCHEMES

*Derek Young*

*Project Manager of 'Public Transport and the Tourist'*

In Scotland we regard the strengths of our tourism product to be environment, history, culture, hospitality and opportunities for activities. To achieve the desired long-term growth in visitor numbers and expenditure we have to promote effectively and ensure that all aspects of Scottish Tourism are of the highest quality.

With transport, general tourism promotion emphasises ease of travel both to and within the country by all modes including private car which is favoured by over 75% of visitors. Transport promoted as an attraction tends to be in the form of luxury trains and ships, heritage stock and scenic railways.

*Public Transport and the Tourist* is a joint agency development initiative set up in 1992 to resolve difficulties visitors face in using public transport to get around Scotland. One area of action is to identify and support experimental schemes to improve access by public transport to either urban or rural visitor attractions and destinations.

The first trail scheme was identified in the Trossachs, a highland area long attracting intense tourism and leisure use but where local bus services are few or non-existent. A multi-agency working group was formed (transport authority, tourist board, enterprise company, part authority) under the chairmanship of the Rural Stirling Economic Partnership, the body which is also coordinating a new sustainable tourism programme for the area.

The objective was to test demand for what became three seasonal bus routes each with different characteristics and likely to attract different combinations of users. The first, a short circular route through the heart of the Trossachs. The second, a long distance route by Loch Tay and into neighbouring Tayside Region. The third, a shuttle service along the east shore of Loch Lomond. Every aspect of the services—routes, stops, timings, connections, information—were designed to be visitor friendly and, as scheduled public services, to meet local needs as well. This latter aspect qualified the scheme for operational support from the transport authority which also set the fare levels.

With so many other local tourism products to compete with for attention and with a limited project budget, it was decided that marketing would have to be based on quickly establishing a distinctive identity and appeal for the buses. The name 'Trundler' was thought up and matched with the line 'The Country Bus', to suggest the nature of the service. This name was applied to all the routes to indicate the network travel possibilities, thus the 'Trossachs Trundler', the 'Loch Tay Trundler' and the 'Loch Lomond Trundler'.

A bright colour leaflet was designed highlighting the variety of destinations and attractions served by the routes, the possibilities for activities in the countryside and the environmental benefits associated with public transport. Separate timetable inserts were produced as were bus-stop boards, posters and bus logo panels. Leaflets were distributed through tourist information centres, bus and rail stations, libraries, hostels, hotels and other tourist trade outlets.

The trump card however was securing a beautifully restored vintage bus complete with conductor/commentator for the daily Trossachs service which from launch day in April 1993 onwards has attracted excellent and vital media attention, including a piece on ITV's 'Wish You Were Here'.

Trail services have continued this summer with a number of changes to routes and participation in the 'Freedom of Scotland Travelpass' ticket. The scheme will shortly be reviewed. The 'Trossachs Trundler' has performed well and may have a commercial future as a heritage transport operation.

*Public Transport and the Tourist* has also been involved in developing the 'Discovering Glasgow' bus service and potential transport schemes in other parts of the country have been

identified. Some of the lessons learnt to date are listed below:

- providing an enjoyable journey experience is an important factor if passenger demand is to be stimulated; many people stay on just for the scenic ride. 'Something different' also attracts vital publicity and can lead to merchandising opportunities to aid financial viability;
- colourful identity through vehicle livery and print design helps grab attention and overcomes the sometimes drab image of public transport;
- enthusiasm of the transport operator can make all the difference in terms of the friendliness and quality of service; a stake in revenue generation is a good incentive; operator-led schemes need to be encouraged; provision of customer care training for transport employees is helpful;
- designing a formula for a particular service by committee is time consuming. The Trundler scheme took nine months to plan. Implementation can also be time consuming, where attention to detail and input of different agency expertise is important;
- planning to meet the needs of tourist and leisure users and also local community users can make for a viable service; 50% of 'Trossachs Trundler' users are local people making work and social journeys;
- the deregulated and commercialised transport environment limits the involvement of the public sector agencies; eg an existing commercial bus service cannot be disadvantaged by a subsidised one but the reverse can happen; participation of a local transport authority is preferable for contract and safety reasons;
- the environmental issues are not straightforward eg without wider traffic management measures buses can add to road congestion, it remains difficult to persuade people not to use cars and in the context of tourism it not policy to do so on a national scale, only at localised sites under pressure.



## INTEGRATING TRANSPORT POLICIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

*Colin Speakman*

*Managing Director of 'Transport for Leisure'*

The late Dennis Potter, in a memorable lecture at the Edinburgh Festival in 1993, spoke of the "occupying powers" who now controlled the commanding heights of many aspects of economic and social life in the UK. By this he meant a group of narrow, political extremists, of what used to be called the far right, who have successfully imposed their own, somewhat bizarre agenda on a largely supine and apathetic population; policies based on so-called unleashed market forces; on monetarism (whatever that may mean); on de-regulation. These have affected almost every sphere of our lives in ways that the old Marxists of Eastern Europe would have cause to envy.

Thus in transport policy. The last ten years have witnessed perhaps the most radical — I would prefer to use the term reactionary — changes in transport policies in Britain ever to have taken place. It began with the de-regulation of buses which has resulted, in all but a few areas, in reduced services, higher fares, a 20%-25% reduction in passengers, an appalling lack of reliable timetable information, an ageing fleet of old, highly polluting vehicles chasing fewer passengers, lower wages for drivers — and the fastest ever switch to private transport as passengers vote if not with their feet, with their steering wheels. Government Ministers with a Panglossian disregard for reality, have the nerve to present this as success. If this is success I wonder what failure is.

And on the back of this triumph of political doctrine over common sense comes rail privatisation. Every transport professional knows it won't work. Disruption, disintegration and chaos is the inevitable result. This is already happening, as train operating companies no longer accept each others' tickets on certain routes and delete other companies services from their timetables, whilst Railtrack imposes artificial costs for use of existing track which if imposed on road operators as tolls for the use of roads would rapidly drive bus companies, lorry operators and even car manufacturers into bankruptcy.

But the worse may yet be to come. There are the so called local Government Reforms which, if they take place in England as they are in Wales and Scotland, will get rid of many authorities, such as Gwynedd County Council, earmarked for early extinction. Gwynedd, despite the many byzantine problems and restrictions of the infamous 1985 Transport Act, is succeeding in shielding both local communities and visitors from the worst effects of deregulation whilst at the same time developing genuinely integrated public transport policies in Snowdonia and elsewhere.

I make no apologies for suggesting that the first fundamental step towards creating integrated transport policies in the UK is to change Government policies to ones which begin to understand the fundamental relationships that exist between planning, transport and the environment. The second step is to allow Local Government to do the job it was intended to do, rather than being weakened, grossly underfunded and demoralised by a system which is now so centralist and subject to Ministerial *diktat* that it would make former East German communist hardliners blush with shame.

Thankfully, there is evidence that there could be a gleam of light in the distance, with a series of top scientific reports from prestigious scientific bodies, such as the United Kingdom Photochemicals Oxidants Review Group and the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. These are spelling out the consequences of rising car ownership and dramatic increase in car mileages resulting from the Government's dedicated pro-car and pro-motoring policies. There has been a recognition, at least in some quarters, that no amount of environmentally destructive road building will ever solve traffic problems. This is because demand rises even faster than roads can be built, whilst air quality has deteriorated in the countryside as much as towns to a degree that one child in seven is now likely to be an asthma

sufferer, with poor air quality almost certainly a key factor.

Most significantly, the Departments of the Environment and Transport, with their PPG13 Policy Document on Transport, have, for the first time since the 1970s, admitted the clear links between transportation and development policies, at least in an urban context. There is now a clear change of strategy to limit out of town, car-served shopping and leisure development because of their catastrophic consequences in terms of traffic generation, congestion, accidents and pollution.

But this isn't just an urban problem. As the Countryside Commission's Research paper 'Trends in Transport and the Countryside' (CCP382) reveals, rising car ownership cannot forever be absorbed by the urban environment, but leads to faster than average growth levels in prosperous rural areas and into heavily visited areas of countryside such as National Parks.

### **Integrated traffic and transport policies for the countryside are now urgently overdue.**

What does integration mean? On one level, it means creating rational, comprehensible networks of public transport, linked to the supportive green modes of walking and cycling. Networks are a mental concept — the London Underground is an outstanding example — in which people can move freely, understanding and perceiving the relationships between different modes, and how they interrelate. If you want an outstanding example of how this operates go to Switzerland to see a cheap, efficient network. Here, the rural post bus serves a deep rural hinterland of small villages and even isolated hamlets, feeding to and from a rural branch railway which in turn feeds to and from the mainline. You will see similar systems in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and even parts of both rural and urban areas of the United Kingdom where despite the many problems, local authorities have been able to retain some vestige of an integrated network.

But why should local authorities have to find ways round useless, damaging legislation, and situations where the so-called Office of Fair Trading can actually, against the public interest, prevent bus companies from collaborating over interavailable tickets and common fare structures? Why is it, uniquely in public transport-hating England, illegal for rail companies to operate buses? Do we have to assume that Government, in thrall to the road lobby, doesn't want to allow public transport to compete on a level playing field with the private car?

To suggest that integrated networks can be created purely by leaving it to private operators and so-called market forces is deeply ignorant. It ignores the many distortions of the market such as company car subsidies, and car allowances, or a car taxation system of high fixed charges which make all journeys marginal. It ignores the massive subsidy to roads in the form of not only road building and maintenance, but in not paying for the many costs of congestion, accidents, policing, danger to non motorised users, pollution and increasing environmental degradation.

One mechanism to help redress the balance is in pricing. Recreational travel in the countryside is highly price sensitive. Even non car owners measure the value for money of a bus or train journey by the cost of that marginal cost of that trip by car — ie petrol costs. Such tickets as the Wayfarer ticket in Greater Manchester and the Peak District, the West Yorkshire Day Rover, the London Travelcards, the Strathclyde Rural Daycard, the North and Mid Wales Ranger Bws Gywnedd ticket in Snowdonia are all outstanding examples of value-for money network tickets which have survived — thanks to the commitment of local authorities — the insanity of de-regulation. But all are currently under threat from a Government whose transport policies are increasingly out of touch with reality.

On another level, integration is also about creating the right kind of balance between private and public transport, limiting the so-called freedom of the motorists to take his and increasingly her car to the heart of a historic town or village or remote area of countryside. Park and ride, or park and walk, or cycle, is not only a more civilised and environmentally friendly way of travelling into the countryside, but is an infinitely more satisfying way of enjoying and perceiving the natural world, outside the artificial and sense-depriving confines of a box on wheels.

But on a third level, integration is about bringing together traffic, planning and recreational policies in the countryside so that there is positive discrimination in favour of the green modes,

walking, cycling and public transport. It means ensuring that new facilities such as Country Parks or visitor centres are created at or close to quality public transport — best of all a rail station or good bus (or tram) route. It means ensuring that such facilities as self-guided walks, guided walk programmes or trails link into points served by train or bus, and that linear routes served by public transport rather than circular walks to and from a car park are developed. It means ensuring that information about public transport is put into all publicity and promotional material. It means ensuring that motorists — like smokers — are made to understand that their addiction can be harmful and if they are reasonably fit and able to use a bus or train, or cycle or walk, for at least part if not all their journey, they have made a small but nevertheless significant contribution to saving our vulnerable little planet and humankind, and perhaps the very wildlife they are doubtless even more concerned to safeguard.

It means recognising that all transport is a cost — in terms of time, resources and environmental pressure. We should be planning to reduce the need to travel for recreation. Local countryside facilities close to where people live and work need to be priority. Long fast trips up and down the motorway network to a distant National Park or upland region should be seen for what they are — antisocial, anti-environmental activities adding to the burden on an increasingly damaged and overburdened environment.

The need to restrain our travelling also includes those of us who are countryside professionals, who need to think carefully about the journeys they make and the means they use to make them, and plan their activities round public transport access — if necessary using taxis or staying overnight — rather than adding to environmental burdens. This is not to deny that the car has a useful and important role, but rather to suggest that we should be collectively developing a new culture based on reducing our own and our visitors' car dependency. This rather than meeting ever rising demand for roadspace and car parking, and an ever absurd reduction in travel times. We need to actually reduce car use, and to move away from a car dependency culture which in its use of natural resources and its production of congestion, danger, and pollution is a threat to everyone of us, to future generations as well as to the wildlife and natural beauty most of us profess to venerate.

So how do we achieve these things ?

As I said earlier, we need to work clearly and firmly for fundamental changes in the pro-car, pro-lorry transport policies in Britain, demanding a repeal of the notorious 1985 Transport Act which continues to cripple the development of integrated user-friendly networks in both rural and urban areas. We need to support all moves not only to scrap the obscene £20bn roads programme but to put at least some of these resources into the development of user-friendly urban and rural public transport networks. These networks must genuinely reflect the journeys that people want to make — including access to and from local countryside, at prices people can afford to pay. The costs of supporting such networks is a fraction of the sums now being squandered in an ever-more self defeating roads programme, and in car-created congestion and pollution.

We need to plan access to local countryside facilities to reflect available public transport networks, looking at the available services, especially at weekends, from nearby conurbation and residential areas. It needs to be seen if services meet basic accessibility criteria, such as allowing people to reach a chosen area of countryside before noon and return around teatime, at prices they can afford and which compare favourably with the price of petrol — the marginal cost of using a car. If services do not exist, and there is a proven need, then they need to be provided, without the kind of myopic parsimoniousness which sees every bus or train journey as a regrettable "subsidy" even where multi-million pound budgets exist to cater for and encourage car-based activities.

We need to adopt planning and transportation strategies which have the courage to determine the capacities of an area in terms of car accessibility. If it is necessary to close car parks, close roads or adopt pricing regimes to limit their use at peak times, then it should be done, despite the knee-jerk reaction of the car lobby and local commercial interests. Clearly the stick of restriction needs to be accompanied by the carrot both of park and ride and the promotion of integrated bus and train networks. Such measures must inevitably be preceded by a vigorous process of public education. After all, local traders too have children suffering from asthma, or children who are killed in traffic accidents. They may already be losing trade through traffic blight.

What we are really involved in is a battle for hearts and minds. The car-culture as we know it has got to change. If it does not do so, in the countryside as much as in towns, as the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution will warn us, the consequences are dire.

**References:**

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## PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

*Bill Breakell*

*Tourism Officer for North York Moors National Park*

### INTRODUCTION

“Some of the problems—indeed, perhaps the most important—that confront us today were simply not foreseen in 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. First and foremost there is the motor car. For the first time a larger proportion of our population has not only the time to spend on outdoor activities, it has also got the means to do so.”

That quotation is almost identical to the opening paragraph of the 1994 policy paper on Roads and Transport in National Parks from the Association of National Parks.

Yet it was made almost 30 years ago. It was, in fact, spoken by Fred Willey, Minister of Land and Natural Resources, to the Harrogate Conference of Park Planning Authorities in May 1965.

So, if we've been talking about it for 30 years, what has happened? And, perhaps more importantly, what have we learned?

Firstly, I think that we have learned that the love affair with the car is, like many a love affair, a highly emotive subject. And an affair which is prone to illogicality.

Second, increasing access to the countryside has long been a key objective of many of the countryside agencies. So achieving greater access—by whatever means—may have been notched up as a success. And with an increasing reliance on tourism as a means of underpinning the local economy, volume and value of visitors has become a force to be reckoned with.

But as the volume of car borne visitors has increased, so has our knowledge of their environmental impact: their exhaust gases, the damage to verges and commons, the sheep deaths.

It is never my car which is the problem, it is the one in front.

### THE NEED TO TRAVEL

The migration of people from the countryside to towns has been an important part of our culture for almost 200 years. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many of us wish to return to the countryside for recreation: for ‘refreshment of body, mind and spirit’ as the early proponents of National Parks put it.

When deciding the locations of protected landscapes, especially our National Parks, accessibility was of prime importance. It is no coincidence that when the Hobhouse Report identified the North York Moors for designation as a National Park, it stated:

“There are few places elsewhere in Britain which can offer such extensive and remote tracts of wild and unspoilt scenery within such easy reach of populated areas.”

Although, the 'easy reach' was based on railway lines and bus services since decimated, the 'populated areas' continue to generate visitors by the million, heading to the countryside by car. But the need to travel includes not only travel to protected areas, but travel through such countryside. A road atlas of the UK shows how many through routes cut swathes through National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

In some National Parks, over half the traffic is heading to an ultimate destination outside the Park boundary. Not my car, just the ones in front and behind...

## ACCESS FOR ALL

The early legislation placed an obligation for the countryside agencies to promote access for all 'regardless of wealth and social class.' Therefore there is not only a desire, but a responsibility for us to encourage people into the countryside.

But whilst Dower could say, in 1945, that "there can be no question of restricting the use of any of these National Parks by private cars", he was making his statement in a nation with about 2 million private cars. Today we welcome **22 million** cars onto our roads.

## SOME SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

For the local communities, traffic is a significant disadvantage of tourism. Local communities may also feel disadvantaged when they see heavy promotion of car-based recreation. Many residents must accept a more static, expensive and possibly less-rewarding lifestyle than their town cousins if they have no access to a car. Especially vulnerable groups are the young, the elderly, the disabled, and women.

In the North York Moors, over half the respondents to a survey which went to every household in the Park said that traffic was a problem, frequently referring to congestion, parking, environmental damage and accidents.

At a national level, the CPRE found that 68% of respondents from amenity societies now anticipate increased environmental damage from traffic growth. However, whilst rural communities are concerned about the disbenefits of increased traffic, they are increasingly dependent on the car as health and education services continue to be 'rationalised', as village post offices and shops close.

Conflicting messages are also evident for the visitor to the countryside: most car manufacturers seem to sell their cars based on a television image of empty moorland roads, or or alongside peaceful Scottish lochs. And almost every week John Craven arrives with his 'Countryfile'—and usually parks in the middle of a field, or on a grass verge—in his Land Rover Discovery. (I've never seen him get off a bus to report on countryside issues).

Personal mobility has become integral to the countryside leisure patterns of the last twenty years. The private car has undoubtedly given access to the countryside for millions. It has perhaps made a major contribution to the increased understanding of environmental issues by getting people out to historic sites or to beautiful landscapes, to nature reserves and heritage coasts.

The membership of the National Trust and English Heritage, of CADW or the Wildlife Trusts has been boosted by the fact that members can get access to 'their' part of the conserved heritage by car. But increasingly visitors are aware of the problems which the car brings. Some can see that they are not only in a traffic jam, but they are a contributor to it. That the landscape beauty they have come to see is not only spoilt by parked cars, but that their car is a despoiler too.

The very peace and quiet which visitors come to seek is being eroded by their neighbours ... and by themselves. But not by me and my car.

## OPTIONS FOR REDUCING IMPACT

Traffic growth prediction suggest that country roads may take a high proportion of the traffic increases projected over the next thirty years.

If we are to protect the livelihoods and quality of life of rural communities, provide the environment which visitors expect, and protect our natural and national inheritance, we require a long term solution.

The 'trend reversing' approach of damage limitation, enhanced public transport and better education, must be part of a broad 'hearts and minds' campaign fought at national level.

Whilst recreational traffic in the countryside is a vital issue, it cannot be dealt with in isolation. It may need to be dealt with as part of a continuum which includes coach traffic, regular bus services, local transport to work, school or leisure facilities, distribution and commercial vehicle needs, and the use of through routes by recreational and non-recreational traffic.

The issue has, of course, been given a high profile recently by the publication of the Royal Commission report on Transport and Environment. This has generated much heated comment and it may be appropriate for us to keep stoking the debate. Change is inevitable and may best be achieved by a combination of moral persuasion and regulation.

Areas such as National Parks have an added responsibility and a special opportunity to progress the issues of recreational travel in the countryside. Firstly, the status as a National Park carries a high esteem and emotional bonding from its visitors and many—but not all—of its residents.

By mustering this support we must build confidence and awareness amongst users of the countryside to the extent that they may adopt a different attitude to their use of personal transport. Even to my car?

## LOCAL CASE STUDY

Farndale is a small valley within the North York Moors National Park which is a regional destination, especially during the springtime with seven miles of wild daffodils in the valley. It attracts between 30,000 and 50,000 visitors during a six or seven week season, causing congestion on the narrow lanes which are mainly contained by stone walls.

In 1993 we undertook a survey of visitors to identify their characteristics, especially their origin (via postcodes), activity and attitudes to park and ride (including frequency and pricing preferences).

Following analysis of the results we discussed opportunities with the local community (including parish councils and commercial interests).

Designing and testing the scheme involved work with timetables to ensure that links were made, where possible, with existing services and to ensure that minibuses passed at safe locations. We drove the route by bus to identify hazards and get an accurate and realistic journey time. We arranged free and secure car parking (with an attendant who could bring added confidence and information to users). We even had contingency plans, via radio contact, to rescue visitors should the last bus out of the valley be full.

Promoting the service was never going to be easy. Too much publicity and the local communities would accuse us of increasing visitor pressure: too little publicity and we would have empty buses. In the event we got accused of both: so we either got it right or wrong!

One major vehicle for information was local radio. Having studied the postcode analysis of our 1993 visitors, we knew that a high proportion came from within the Radio York transmission area. A regular weekly broadcast was made to promote the service and to explain the reasons behind it. (This activity has continued even after the end of the park and ride service, to encourage public transport use in both the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks).

The service was implemented with a considerable degree of success. Passenger numbers and times were monitored and every passenger was asked to complete a simple questionnaire. The results of the experiment and its monitoring have led to a commitment to extend the service in 1995.

## POSTSCRIPT: THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

*Colin Speakman*

*Managing Director of 'Transport for Leisure'*

Since the Workshop on November 1st, the Royal Commission's report has become available. It is clearly a document which has the scope to change thinking and awareness about the wider implications of transport planning and policy in the UK. It will influence debate at all levels. I would suggest that it should be seen to be compulsory reading for anyone at the Workshop.

Far from being the kind of narrow green lobby document as caricatured in the press, it is in fact, a cautious, carefully argued report by a number of highly reputed scientists and academics. Far from contradicting conventional economic realities, as the report points out it's not a question of preventing people owning cars, but of using them more responsibly. Resources shifted away from environmentally damaging road building (and the jobs with them) will in turn create the urgently required public transport infrastructure needed—railways, tramways, underground systems, and even the better maintenance of existing highways.

Nevertheless the message is clear. Current transport policies are not only inherently unsustainable but are imposing huge, intolerable costs on society and the UK economy. Come what may, a combination of factors, including congestion, pollution, increasing anger at the destruction of the countryside close to area where people live, will force change.

The report also highlights the way traffic growth reflects a wide range of policies, unconscious and otherwise, such as the creation of car-served out of town shopping centres, and the deregulation of buses, which in combination which have accelerated the drift to car ownership and increased car usage. Different policies, such as many of those adopted in Germany and the Netherlands, could reverse this trend. Perhaps we have too easily adopted the DoT's increasingly discredited (and discreditable) "predict and provide" philosophy, which forecasts USA levels of car ownership in a country which is far smaller, far more crowded and far poorer.

The report identifies that no less than 40% of the mileage driven by car drivers is for leisure purposes. The Report also makes a number of extremely positive, achievable recommendations which are not about totally changing a largely car-dominated society, but at least reducing the intensity of the nightmare facing us. The proposed increase to 20% public transport use and 30% by 2020 which as it will at one and the same time by accompanied by a variety of gradual restraint measures not simply be "three years traffic growth" because these measures will help to reduce this otherwise catastrophic exponential growth.

As our own deliberations at Birmingham concurred, a fundamental change of attitude is required at every level of Government, including Government agencies and local authorities.

But again, the report gives a clear direction for everyone involved in area management or the countryside. A key paragraph (6.43) suggests what it is perhaps all going to be about in the decades ahead:

"Changes in lifestyle have an important role to play in creating a sustainable transport system for the UK. They need to embrace, not only a greater resort to walking and cycling, but far-reaching changes in the way people perceive and use other modes of transport. New lifestyles cannot be imposed by governments. It is not likely that they could be bought about solely by education or persuasion, or by other promotional measures, on a sufficient scale to resolve the basic dilemmas of present transport policies. Greener lifestyles will have to be spread over a period of time. They will have more appeal to people at certain periods of their lives, and may be taken up more readily in some areas of the country than in others. Their eventual success will depend on the action taken by central and local government to provide frameworks within which individual choices can be exercised in an environmentally responsible way."