



LowCVP's Andy Eastlake Will 2020 be the year when transport decarbonisation hits the fast lane?

The General Election has inevitably resulted in a temporary hiatus in transport (and all other areas of) policy. With the urgency for change growing all the time, the stop-start nature of politics can be frustrating for those of us closely involved.

General Elections aren't the only reason for this; there have been 13 different transport secretaries since 1997 (more than one every two years) and there have been even more transport ministers responsible for our particular policy area. Every different change of administration, or minister, can result in delay or a change in policy direction, of course, but fortunately for LowCVP, our overriding mission of decarbonisation transcends any party political agenda. So, despite the current hiatus, it's clear that big changes are in the pipeline in terms of road transport policy. In October, responding to the passage of the net zero legislation the (then) Government published a document setting out 'measures to go further and faster on climate change'.

Recognising the need to scale up efforts in the transport industry, the Government said, the UK's first Transport Decarbonisation Plan has been announced which will "bring together a bold and ambitious programme of coordinated action needed to end the UK's transport emissions by 2050".

While, at this stage, this is only a plan to make a plan, the Government is signalling that major changes are coming down the pipeline.

The outgoing Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said: "From driving our cars, to catching a train or taking a flight abroad, it is crucial that we ensure transport is as environmentally friendly as possible.

"This is why, as well as agreeing to the CCC's recommendation on net zero by 2050, we have launched this ground-breaking plan to achieve net zero emissions across every single mode of transport."

LowCVP are anticipating prompt action on this agenda early in the new year, soon after the General Election dust has settled, irrespective of who is in power. We expect plans will set out what government, business and society will need to do to deliver the significant emissions reduction needed from all modes of transport to get us to 2050.

In particular we need consider not just how UK technology and innovation can be implemented, but also the science and stimulus needed to encourage major changes to the way people and goods move across the UK.

Apart from the obvious requirement to show that the net zero mandate is more than a distant aspirational target by enabling significant actions to put the UK on a credible pathway to net zero in 2050, the Government has a further compelling reason for doing so. The eyes of the world will be on the UK in November 2020 when the 26th CoP (Conference of the Parties) will take place in Glasgow. This international follow-up to Paris 2015 will be a major landmark event in attempts to convene global action on tackling climate change.

The UK – particularly in what may be a post-Brexit world – will want to demonstrate that it is still a major player in world affairs and, crucially, that it has a credible plan for delivering its own legal target, providing it with the authority to lead other nations down a path to net zero.

So, watch out for some major developments on this agenda once 'Auld Lang Syne' has been sung and the decorations are put away once more! Perhaps our biggest celebrations of transport decarbonisation will actually be next year.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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