

# Recommendations

We believe that by implementing the following recommendations Government, partner organisations on the ground and companies themselves could create economically competitive and sustainable transport practices fit for the 21st Century.

## Political commitment from government

- Ensuring that planning measures intended to encourage businesses to adopt sustainable transport measures are backed up with support mechanisms offering simple and readily available advice.
- Providing a better coordinated approach to marketing the benefits of travel plans to small businesses through a long term promotional campaign.
- Further enhancement of the incentive regime open to businesses which adopt sustainable and environmental practices.

## Collaborative working on the ground

- Better integration of transport strategies at the local, sub-regional, regional level.
- Support to businesses from Regional Development Agencies to nurture sustainable company practices where small investments in effective travel planning can offer significant productivity gains.
- Require local authorities to introduce a programme of advice and support to incentivise the widespread adoption of sustainable travel plans.
- Nurture local partnerships bringing together employers, local authorities and

transport operators to maximise the available travel options.

- Ensure the availability of real time information that offers employers and employees genuine transport solutions.

## Company leadership

Companies have the potential to show leadership in changing their business practices to achieve sustainable transport solutions. Options that could be considered are:

- Purchase of environmentally friendly vehicle fleets.
- Arranging subsidised travel through negotiation with local transport operators or offering incentives to employees to use alternative modes of transport.
- Provision of facilities at work that encourage cycling, running, walking to work e.g. bike sheds, showers.
- Varying shift times or creating flexibility at either end of the day to reduce the impact of peak commuting times.
- Providing opportunities for appropriate employees to work from home some or all of the time.
- Investment in video and conferencing facilities curtailing the need to travel.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the national voice of local business.

The BCC is the national body for a powerful and influential national network of Accredited Chambers. The BCC serves not only its 100,000 member businesses, which in turn employ over 5 million people, but also the wider community.

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# Sustainable Transport Smarter Alternatives



THE BRITISH  
CHAMBERS OF  
COMMERCE

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# Foreword



The BCC has been concerned for some time about the mounting cost to business of failure in our transport network, particularly the road network. We are currently looking at sustainable alternatives through a series of workshops engaging key stakeholders and expertise from our membership base. This, the third of five pamphlets on sustainable transport, looks at what can be done to nurture more sustainable work practices in UK companies and represents the thoughts and recommendations of a number of experts in their field who understand the issues and care passionately about making British industry world class.

Many British businesses, particularly larger companies, are already engaged in smarter and more sustainable solutions to their transport issues, either through more flexible working or the use of technology to allow remote or home working. However, there is much more that could be done to establish sustainable smarter alternatives among the business community. The BCC recently conducted its own research which showed that businesses are employing new approaches to flexible working both to improve staff retention rates and increase overall productivity and effectiveness. An important knock on effect is more imaginative flexible working solutions which can bring about a reduction in the reliance of the 9-5 culture.

Smarter choices and flexibility in working practices can alleviate congestion by taking cars off our roads while also significantly reducing companies' carbon emissions. Both goals are important for today's businesses and it is crucial that government is primed to assist small businesses who, through small changes to company procedures, can realise huge gains. Better access to information, advice and training is required for small firms to take advantage of these benefits.

The BCC believes that the business community, in partnership with government, can take an active leadership role in helping firms to adopt new and better work practices to reduce commuting and business travel.

**David Froet**  
Director General  
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# Case Studies

## BT – the flexible working champion

BT, as an early adopter of flexible working, has saved £350 million from allowing employees to tailor their work around their lives. It currently has over 70,000 employees that work flexibly. By embracing flexible working practices, the company has built a reputation based on a strong ability to attract and retain employees. In addition to this, its productivity has flourished. With its home working policy in place, BT has 20 per cent less absenteeism than the national average.

But the benefits are not just confined to the business. There is a real demand in the marketplace from employees and society for organisations to adopt flexible working. BT has long since recognised and responded to this. For instance, 99 per cent of BT employees on maternity leave return to work compared to 49 percent of the national average. Currently, 7 out of 10 BT staff work flexibly and nearly 10 per cent are home based.

The environment is also a key beneficiary of flexible working. By 2010, the benefits to the UK economy in reduced congestion could be as much as £1.9 billion. BT employees save on average 12 million litres of car fuel a day by working flexibly.

## The Workplace Travel Plan Company (WTPC)

This Newcastle company has identified that many organisations, particularly small to medium-sized, are interested in preparing a workplace travel plan or are obliged to do so as a function of a planning condition. However, the companies lack either the resource or 'know how' to design and implement any plan effectively.

WTPC has created an online facility to help organisations to prepare a plan and offer

consultancy support to help companies to put their plan in place. They have worked with Ravensworth Property Developments and Redcar and Cleveland Council to support companies moving in to a new development in Kirkleatham Business Park in the Tees Valley. This business park already has severe parking issues and an influx of a further 17 businesses and around 100 employees clearly could exacerbate the problem. The companies are using the support available to encourage employees to consider alternatives to the motor car.

## Haydock Industrial Estate, St Helens Chamber

Haydock Industrial Estate, on the edge of the M6, is the largest employment area in St. Helens, providing jobs for over 4,500 people. It was surprising to find that there was no public transport serving the area at times when significant numbers of workers could use a service, which caused problems for employers recruiting and retaining staff, made it difficult for existing employees to get to work and reduced access to jobs for unemployed people.

However, St Helen's Chamber brought together St Helens Council, local businesses, Merseytravel, Merseyside Travelwise and Arriva together to plan and introduce a bus service that would significantly improve accessibility to Haydock Industrial Estate. The collation and mapping of staff postcodes and shift patterns provided by the Chamber meant there was quality data to ensure the service was routed to suit local employees and the shift times of local businesses. The initial service, subsidised by St. Helens Chamber through Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding, was designed to become commercially viable in time and to demonstrate the need for public transport access, not only to Haydock but to other industrial areas where public transport has traditionally been weak.

# Challenges

As congestion in our cities has increased, government and local authorities have sought to impose on business 'workplace travel plans', largely through the planning system. Measures such as Section 106 agreements<sup>1</sup> allow local authorities to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation with a land developer, often requiring them to minimise the impact on the local community. However, the implementation of such schemes have raised a number of issues. Many initiatives are put forward not as a realistic option to reduce congestion but to tick the boxes in order to gain planning approval. Once schemes have been requested there is often little or no enforcement.

The nature of travel planning and the fact it is more often than not a part of the planning process means that the initiative does not reach most businesses who make up the majority of urban traffic. This is not to say that the business world ignores travel planning but that it lacks the advice and assistance required to set up such schemes. Travel Planning lends itself initially to larger businesses that have critical mass for implanting shuttle services to and from work for their employees. However, smaller companies, have limited resource to spare and, whilst they are not looking for financial support, they do need advice and encouragement. Travel plans ought to create solutions that are good for the environment and for a firm's bottom line; but too often they are left frustratingly incomplete or not implemented to best advantage. Simple measures such as collaboration between businesses, however, could alleviate such problems. Measures such as car sharing can offer a simple cost effective solution yet the availability of such schemes was often unknown among many businesses.

Flexible working arrangements and / or 'home working' can have a substantial impact on the

times and volumes of journeys made, but neither are possible for all employees. Clearly, also, changes to the role of individuals at work or to their domestic circumstances can disrupt the best laid plans.

Many employers and their employees would be prepared to make changes in their travel habits if they had good information about other modes of transport available to them e.g. bus services. Reliable bus services appearing every few minutes without fail, travelling with the certainty of arriving before a given time, and with real time information at bus stops are not a common occurrence associated with many industrial and commercial centres.

Creating an attractive 'public transport' alternative is essential. The foundations lie in partnerships where local employers work with bus companies and local authorities to create solutions.

<sup>1</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990.