



NON-VERBATIM MEETING NOTE

ROAD TO NET ZERO: ACCELERATING NET ZERO TRANSPORT

Unblocking the barriers

17:00-19:00, Tuesday 22nd April 2025

Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House, London, SW1A 2JR

Key question

“What policy incentives would unblock the barriers to cleaner greener journeys and make Net Zero transport an affordable, accessible, attractive, available and reliable choice for all?”

Summary

This NZAPPG session explored how to unblock the barriers to Net Zero transport through targeted policy and practical reform. As transport remains the UK’s largest source of carbon emissions, speakers highlighted the need for joined-up strategy, investment in infrastructure, and a clear regulatory framework to support the shift to low-carbon mobility.

Discussion focused on the urgency of meeting the Government’s 2035 target of an 81% emissions reduction—requiring faster decarbonisation of travel across all modes. Achieving this means making cleaner choices not only accessible and affordable, but also more convenient and desirable for everyone.

Participants stressed that while zero-emission transport is essential to climate and economic goals, progress remains slow. Affordability gaps, policy inconsistencies,



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limited infrastructure, and public distrust—especially around EVs—are holding back change. The session underlined that delivery now depends on clarity of vision, coordinated planning, and a just transition that works for all communities.

CHAIR'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Alex Sobel MP, Chair, Net Zero APPG

- Alex Sobel opened the session by outlining the purpose and evolving programme of the Net Zero All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). He explained that since its inception around COP26 in Glasgow, the APPG has expanded its focus to cover all major aspects of the UK's Net Zero transition. For 2025, the group is running a series of events under the theme of "Accelerating Net Zero," with this session on transport forming one part of a wider programme that includes clean power, buildings and homes, emission infrastructure, and financing the transition.
- Sobel emphasised the APPG's role in linking Parliament with industry, civil society, and the public, and noted the increasingly urgent tone of climate warnings from the IPCC and the UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC). Despite previous leadership on climate, he warned that the UK is now "diverging from its Net Zero pathway" and faces a growing gap between ambition and reality.
- He underscored that transport is now the UK's largest emitting sector, having overtaken energy, which has seen greater decarbonisation progress over the past two decades. This makes work on transport—its planning, investment, and regulation—central to the UK's Net Zero future.
- Sobel described the stop-start nature of government policy on transport in recent years and called for more consistency, especially around public transport interoperability, modal shift, EV charging infrastructure, and emerging technologies like electric scooters, which currently lack regulatory frameworks.
- As a Leeds MP, he drew attention to the fact that West Yorkshire remains the largest UK city region without a mass transit system—a clear sign that public transport is underdeveloped in many areas. He expressed hope that the region's proposed mass transit project would soon receive Treasury funding, but used it as an example of the UK falling behind comparable European cities in delivering clean, efficient transport systems.



- Framing the day's session, Sobel said the goal was to identify barriers to low-carbon transport and explore the policy changes, investment, and planning reforms needed to accelerate delivery at scale, while ensuring solutions are accessible, affordable, and visibly beneficial to people's lives.
- He concluded by welcoming the expert panel and the participation of Ruth Cadbury MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, before handing over to the first speaker.

ACCELERATING NET ZERO TRANSPORT PANEL

Claire Haigh, Founder and CEO, Greener Vision

- Claire Haigh called for a radical shift in the UK's approach to decarbonising transport, arguing that the current trajectory is far from adequate. Despite over three decades of effort, emissions from surface transport have remained flat since 1990. To meet the UK's climate targets—including a 68% reduction in transport emissions by 2030—Haigh stressed that emissions cuts will need to quadruple.
- She posed a central question: what would a credible and politically deliverable framework for transport decarbonisation look like? In answering, she emphasised the importance of embedding low-carbon choices into everyday behaviour and systems. This includes making clean transport the easiest and most attractive choice through a major focus on behaviour change, including reducing car kilometres by around 25% by 2030.
- Haigh warned that decades of car-centric planning mean behaviour change will require a whole-systems approach, integrating transport policy with energy, land use, digital connectivity, clean finance, employment, education, and health. She argued for more efficient use of existing assets through car and charge-point sharing, and working with employers to reduce travel demand through digitalisation.
- On fiscal measures, Haigh advocated for fair and progressive road pricing to reflect the real cost of carbon, cautioning that simply replacing internal combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles (EVs) risks entrenching car dependency. Without reforming road taxation, electrification could lead to



increased car use, congestion, and a £35 billion fiscal black hole, as identified by the Transport Select Committee. She warned that falling running costs of EVs may actually accelerate this problem.

- Haigh also highlighted the need for equity in transport policy, noting that EV adoption is currently skewed toward higher-income households. She argued for investment in local sustainable transport networks and pointed out that while the real cost of motoring has fallen over 20 years, public transport costs have risen, undermining modal shift.
- On governance, she welcomed moves towards regional devolution and integrated local strategies through combined authorities. However, she cautioned that system-wide behaviour change will not be achieved without clear pricing signals or constraints on car use.
- Haigh concluded by urging cross-party agreement on road pricing and calling for a national public conversation as part of the Government's forthcoming Net Zero Public Engagement Strategy. She argued this was the ideal forum to build consensus around the urgent and ambitious changes required to accelerate transport decarbonisation.

James Court, Public Policy Director, Octopus EV

- James Court delivered a candid assessment of the current government's progress on Net Zero transport, remarking that while there has been strong rhetoric around green growth, the first nine months of policy delivery have been underwhelming. He stressed the urgent need for action over talk, particularly in the electric vehicle (EV) sector, where uncertainty and mixed messaging have undermined confidence.
- Court made the case for accelerating EV deployment as both a cost-effective carbon reduction strategy and a vital industrial policy. He noted that EVs remain the most impactful and cost-efficient pathway to abatement, according to the Climate Change Committee. He argued that decarbonising cars and vans is a necessary first step, not only to meet climate targets but also to preserve the UK's domestic manufacturing base. With 70% of the UK's car exports destined for



markets with internal combustion engine (ICE) phase-out plans, failure to transition risks economic decline.

- He criticised recent policy shifts, particularly around hybrids, which he called “still petrol cars,” and lamented the confusion created by inconsistent government language. Moves to weaken the 2030 ICE phase-out and promote hybrids, he said, had introduced damaging uncertainty at a time when market clarity is critical. Court highlighted the need for strong, consistent messaging and warned that undermining consumer trust could stall progress.
- Turning to barriers to adoption, Court identified two key issues: the cost of EVs and the availability and visibility of charging infrastructure. While he projected price parity between EVs and ICE vehicles by 2027–2028, he called for interim policies to support affordability. He argued that charging infrastructure, though improving, is often misunderstood in media discourse. While satisfaction among current EV drivers is high—with less than 2% considering a return to petrol—perceived “charging deserts” in some regions still deter potential buyers.
- Court stressed that greater visibility and affordability of public charging are essential. This includes addressing planning delays, reducing red tape, and reforming electricity pricing to eliminate distortions that currently place the burden of renewable and social levies on electricity rather than gas. He criticised the continued application of VAT on public charging and called for a whole suite of low-cost, high-impact policy reforms to accelerate rollout.
- He concluded with a call for less commentary and more delivery. With a limited window left before the next election, he urged the government to stop “shouting from the sidelines” and instead act decisively to secure the EV transition. His remarks underscored the importance of EVs not just for emissions reduction, but for safeguarding the UK’s economic and industrial future.

Rob Griggs, Policy and Public Affairs Director, Airlines UK

- Rob Griggs outlined the aviation sector’s pathway to Net Zero and the central role of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) in that transition. He acknowledged that aviation has no silver bullet solution, and achieving net zero by 2050 will require a combination of technologies, including hydrogen aircraft, airspace



modernisation, and long-term changes in demand. However, he emphasised that SAF will do the “heavy lifting” on emissions reduction—estimated to deliver around 14% of the total reduction needed.

- Griggs welcomed the recent SAF mandate, which requires fuel suppliers to blend increasing proportions of SAF into aviation fuel—starting in 2025 and rising to 10% by 2030 and 22% by 2040. He described the mandate as ambitious and necessary but warned that mandates alone are insufficient to deliver the needed supply and infrastructure.
- To address this, he praised the Government’s decision to legislate for a Revenue Certainty Mechanism (RCM), designed to give investors confidence and unlock private capital for UK-based SAF production. The RCM would operate similarly to Contracts for Difference in the energy sector, helping de-risk long-term investments in SAF plants.
- Griggs stressed the importance of domestic SAF production, not only for environmental reasons but to ensure cost stability. He noted that current SAF costs—at around £5,000–6,000 per tonne versus £900 for conventional jet fuel—make affordability a critical issue. If SAF is not produced at scale in the UK, fuel suppliers may resort to purchasing compliance credits, passing high costs to airlines and ultimately to consumers, without delivering environmental benefits.
- He also highlighted the role of waste feedstocks in SAF production, noting that current UK policy diverts many valuable waste streams to energy generation instead. Griggs argued that using these resources for SAF would be many times more carbon-efficient, and called for reforms to direct waste toward its most sustainable use.
- A key challenge, he said, is the lack of incentives in the UK compared to the EU. While the EU’s Emissions Trading Scheme recycles revenues into SAF development, the UK lacks a similarly structured incentive system. Griggs urged the UK Government to learn from these international examples and adopt financial mechanisms to help close the cost gap between SAF and traditional aviation fuels.
- He also proposed leveraging public financing tools like the National Wealth Fund to help capitalise SAF plants, and recommended updates to sustainability criteria—such as allowing the use of cover crops as feedstocks—to unlock new sources of low-carbon fuel.



- Griggs concluded by reiterating that while the 2030 SAF target is challenging, it is achievable. With the right combination of regulatory clarity, financial support, and waste policy reform, he argued that the UK can not only meet its targets but also establish a world-leading domestic SAF industry, creating jobs, enhancing energy security, and supporting a competitive, sustainable aviation sector.

David Clarke, Senior Technical Advisor, Railway Industry Association (RIA)

- David Clarke argued that rail has a crucial role to play in the UK's Net Zero transport strategy, but warned that the sector is being held back by policy uncertainty and a lack of consistent investment. Representing the Railway Industry Association (RIA), he advocated for a collaborative, multi-modal approach to decarbonisation, emphasising that public and private transport must evolve together rather than compete.
- He explained that while around one-third of the UK rail network is already electrified, the remaining two-thirds must be addressed to maintain rail's reputation as the cleanest form of mass transport. Clarke presented RIA's "Pathway to Net Zero Rail"—a three-part strategy endorsed by several industry stakeholders, including Network Rail—which outlines a practical and cost-effective route to full decarbonisation by 2050.
 - One third of the network is already electrified.
 - One third does not require electrification and can be served by battery electric trains, many of which are needed now to replace ageing diesel fleets.
 - One third should be electrified via a rolling programme over 25 years, focused on high-use passenger and freight corridors.
- Clarke stressed that while high upfront costs are often cited as a barrier, long-term benefits include lower operating costs, increased reliability, and job creation. He pointed to a positive business case for electrification, not only in carbon terms but also in operational efficiency and industrial sustainability—particularly at a time when UK train factories are underutilised and at risk.



- He also highlighted the “sparks effect”, a phenomenon whereby newly electrified or decarbonised lines attract more passengers, thus improving rail’s viability and public appeal. Clarke argued that the transition must happen now—not in five or ten years—if the UK is to achieve its 2050 targets and avoid obsolescence in rail technology and infrastructure.
- Finally, Clarke called for rail to be seen not just as a transport solution but as part of the wider energy system. With investment, rail could support smart grid integration, energy storage, and emissions reductions beyond its immediate scope. He concluded that decarbonised rail offers a rare convergence of economic, environmental, and public benefits—but only if policy certainty and public investment unlock long-term planning and delivery.

Professor Jillian Anable, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

- Professor Jillian Anable delivered a powerful critique of how behaviour change is currently approached in transport policy, arguing that the UK is fundamentally misunderstanding both the public and the problem. She opened by challenging the prevailing mindset that sees consumers as the problem to be fixed—“pesky people who need to do the right thing”—and called for a shift toward understanding people as rational actors making complex decisions in the context of their everyday lives.
- Anable stressed the importance of honesty and consistency in public messaging, particularly around electric vehicles (EVs). She criticised the long-standing characterisation of EVs as “zero emission vehicles”, pointing out that the public is increasingly aware of the lifecycle emissions and infrastructure inequalities surrounding EV use. For example, she noted that drivers with off-street parking and solar panels can charge at a fraction of the cost compared to those reliant on public charging, exposing stark inequities in access and undermining trust.
- She also called for urgent attention to the second-hand EV market, which currently lacks a coherent strategy, including tax relief or loan subsidies for lower-income buyers. Without this, she warned, EV uptake will remain uneven and socially regressive.
- Turning to broader public engagement, Anable argued that trust is broken, particularly when people are told one thing while experiencing another—such as



sitting in congestion while observing low-traffic neighbourhoods or facing Clean Air Zone restrictions on smaller vehicles while larger, high-emission vehicles go unchallenged. The absence of a clear, consistent strategy only fuels public scepticism.

- Anable issued a sharp warning: alternative transport modes alone won't reduce car use. She cited international evidence showing that real reductions in driving only occur when "carrots are combined with sticks." Incentives such as £2 bus fare caps and new cycle lanes must be paired with disincentives like congestion charges or parking restrictions. Without such measures, modal shift remains negligible.
- She also criticised the oft-cited statistic that 25% of car journeys are under a mile. Even if half of such short trips shifted to active travel, the overall impact on transport emissions would be imperceptible, she argued. The real decarbonisation challenge lies in long-distance car travel—journeys over 15 miles—which account for the majority of emissions.
- Highlighting the example of the Netherlands, Anable observed that while cycling rates are high, overall per capita carbon emissions from travel are similar to the UK because car use remains dominant, particularly for leisure. She stressed the need for structural disincentives on high-carbon travel and comprehensive reform of how we think about long-distance journeys, leisure travel, and car ownership.
- Her policy suggestions included:
 - Restricting internal combustion vehicles in national parks
 - Expanding integrated ticketing
 - Enabling bikes on trains
 - Supporting a return to long-distance coach travel
 - Rethinking planning and transport strategies around destinations, not just modes
- In closing, Anable called for a complete mindset shift—from focusing narrowly on modal options like cycle lanes and buses to reimagining the entire purpose and structure of transport. She emphasised that meaningful change requires not just encouragement, but structural reform, transparency, and bold disincentives—without which behaviour change will not be achieved at the scale or speed required.



ACCELERATING NET ZERO TRANSPORT: UNBLOCKING THE BARRIERS? COMMITTEE CORNER

Ruth Cadbury MP, Chair, Transport Select Committee

- Ruth Cadbury provided an overview of the Transport Select Committee's current position on Net Zero transport, clarifying that as a newly formed committee, it has not yet undertaken any formal work in this area. While the committee has issued just one report—focused on transport accessibility for disabled users—Cadbury confirmed that decarbonisation is a growing focus, with a briefing from the Climate Change Committee already held and an upcoming session with Heidi Alexander expected to explore Net Zero questions further.
- Speaking in a personal capacity, Cadbury raised several key challenges and observations from recent engagements and constituency experience:
 - **EV Charging Inequality:** She highlighted the inequity of access and cost in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, especially for people living in blocks of flats or without off-street parking. Even in relatively affluent areas, retrofitting infrastructure remains difficult, illustrating that the rollout of EVs is not equally accessible across regions or demographics.
 - **Public Transport Outside Cities:** Reflecting on a recent committee visit to Ireland, she praised the All-Ireland rural bus strategy, which provides demand-responsive transport to isolated communities. Backed by strong government funding and rooted in Net Zero policy aims, the initiative has increased mobility for older and low-income residents, and revitalised village centres. Cadbury contrasted this with the patchy provision in England, especially outside major cities.
 - **e-HGVs and Charging Infrastructure:** She noted a recent shift from hydrogen to electric HGVs, which require high-capacity charging infrastructure. This presents a fresh challenge for the motorway network, with megawatt-scale power connections now necessary to support decarbonisation of freight transport.
 - **Airspace and Aviation Policy:** Cadbury raised concerns about airspace modernisation, particularly its localised noise impacts, and warned that



aviation growth could outpace carbon savings from sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and other measures. She criticised the increasing number of UK flights taken for leisure—often second or third holidays—as a potential threat to Net Zero progress, especially if airport expansion continues unchecked.

- **Rail Strategy and Modal Shift:** She called for a coherent high-speed rail strategy, including further electrification and better use of existing infrastructure. HS1, for example, is only 50% utilised. Cadbury also stressed the need to shift long-distance travel from air to rail, and urged for more competition on routes like Eurostar to improve affordability and access.
- **Behaviour Change and Public Sentiment:** Responding to earlier panel comments, she acknowledged the complexities of public reaction to measures like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs). She noted that opposition can be vocal, but support is often underreported. Citing local election results, she argued that community engagement and consistency in messaging are essential to avoid backlash and maintain trust.

WHAT WE NEED TO ACCELERATE NET ZERO TRANSPORT PARLIAMENTARY COMMENT AND RESPONSE

Perran Moon MP

- Perran Moon offered a direct and pragmatic perspective on the challenges of scaling up electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, drawing on his 30 years in the automotive industry, including recent work in EVs. He argued that consecutive governments have mishandled EV rollout, particularly by channelling hundreds of millions of pounds into local authorities, which lack the expertise and capacity to deliver charging infrastructure efficiently. He described the resulting delays as bureaucratic rather than financial or technical, and attributed the situation to a misjudged reliance on under-resourced public bodies.
- Moon contended that the private sector is better placed to deliver the required charging points, noting that it already understands demand, site viability, and future network requirements. He advocated for allowing the private sector to



install commercially viable charge points at zero cost to taxpayers, and using public money instead to subsidise charging infrastructure in deprived and rural areas, where commercial return is unlikely. This, he said, would support a truly just transition.

- Highlighting regional inequalities, Moon pointed to Cornwall, his constituency, where public transport is minimal, electrification is absent, and many residents rely on older, high-emission vehicles due to low incomes and poor alternatives. He warned that urban-centric policy thinking fails to account for the realities of rural and coastal transport needs, where cycle lanes and mode shifts are simply not feasible.
- Moon also addressed the used car market, calling it critical for expanding EV access. He noted that the second-hand car market is three-and-a-half times larger than the new market, and stressed the need for targeted finance packages and tax incentives to support both wholesale and retail adoption. Without such interventions, he warned, mass EV adoption could take decades.
- He criticised deliberate disinformation campaigns about EVs, suggesting they are driven by vested interests seeking to stall progress. Such narratives, he argued, undermine public confidence just as used EVs are beginning to achieve price parity with petrol and diesel alternatives.
- Finally, Moon emphasised the need for a coordinated skills strategy to support the transition, including training new mechanics and reskilling the existing automotive workforce. With over 800,000 people employed in the UK auto sector, he warned that failure to support this shift would jeopardise jobs and economic stability.

Dr Simon Opher MP, Stroud

NET ZERO TRANSPORT QUESTIONS AND DEBATE

Charles Law, Timber Development UK



- Raised concerns about electrification pressures on the grid and argued that the infrastructure upgrade costs should not fall on businesses. Highlighted the broader issue of grid capacity in the face of growing electrification of heating and transport, and called for further debate and strategic planning on grid readiness.
 - Alex Sobel suggested another APPG session about the grid

Gareth Mottram, ADBA

- Emphasised the existing potential of biomethane-fuelled heavy transport. Noted that companies like John Lewis, Tesco, and Amazon are already operating such vehicles, achieving up to 80% CO₂ reductions. Advocated for policy changes to enable efficient use of waste feedstocks and integration into the national gas grid, arguing that this technology avoids placing additional burdens on the electricity grid.

Chris Brown, Climatise

- Outlined the role of shore power in decarbonising the maritime sector. Despite its availability, uptake has been hindered by excessive paperwork and infrastructure costs. He called for changes in energy taxation and highlighted the public health implications of shipping emissions in port towns.

Anna Krajinska, Transport & Environment

- Warned against over-relying on biofuels due to feedstock shortages, imports, and deforestation risks. Argued that only a clear regulatory pathway to zero-emission vehicles will achieve the required emissions cuts. Criticised current flexibility in ZEV mandates, warning it could lead to underperformance by carmakers.

Jonathan Murray, Zemo

- Described decarbonisation as a “system of systems” challenge. Highlighted Zemo’s work in mapping out technology-policy pathways for commercial vehicles in Wales and called on Parliament to lead consensus-building around achievable narratives to unlock investment and guide transition.

Chris Ashley, RHA



- Called for pragmatic acceptance of transitional fuels, warning against “letting perfection be the enemy of the good.” Stressed the need for realism in discussions with DfT and advocated retaining multiple pathways to decarbonise heavy transport.

Nigel Richardson, NAPIT

- Representing electricians, called for clearer, fairer incentives around EV charging, especially for those without driveways. Criticised the VAT disparity between public (20%) and private (5%) charging, highlighting its regressive impact on deprived areas.

PANELLIST RESPONSES

Perran Moon MP

- Agreed on the need to address VAT inequalities in public charging but highlighted the difficulty of fiscal trade-offs. Called for regulatory standards to manage risks from cable charging across pavements and stressed the importance of removing red tape to enable private sector-led rollout. Noted growing competition and falling costs in overnight public charging.

James Court

- Supported pavement gully solutions for equitable charging, but noted cost implications. Argued that current EV charging is only “okay to good” and must surpass petrol refuelling convenience to enable meaningful behavioural shifts. Urged stronger mandates and regulation to counteract supply-side failures, particularly around SUVs.

Professor Jillian Anable

- Condemned the SUV trend as a supply-side failure. Highlighted trade-offs as central to public understanding and called for more realistic modelling of behavioural responses, infrastructure constraints, and vehicle usage patterns.



Criticised the inequity of current transitions and reiterated the need for road pricing as a fair funding mechanism.

Claire Haigh

- Echoed support for a just transition, citing stats on car access among low-income households. Emphasised the need for inclusive transition support for SMEs and praised Zemo's roadmap work. Urged action on road pricing as a now-neglected yet essential reform.

David Clarke

- Advocated for strategic electrification in rail, especially in regions like Cornwall, and urged policy certainty to enable private sector investment. Criticised delays in Great British Railways reform and called for consistent frameworks to guide long-term infrastructure rollout. Warned of grid capacity bottlenecks and called for coordinated energy-transport planning.

CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

Alex Sobel MP, Chair, Net Zero APPG

- In closing, the Chair thanked all participants for contributing to a highly stimulating and policy-rich discussion. Acknowledging the breadth and depth of insight shared, they emphasised the collective importance of events like these in moving the Net Zero transport agenda forward.
- They noted that while many of the challenges discussed will undoubtedly require policy change, others may be addressed through better strategic coordination, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term thinking. The session underscored the complexity of decarbonising transport—not as a series of isolated sectoral issues, but as a whole-system transformation demanding joined-up solutions.
- Looking ahead, the Chair confirmed that the next event in the “Accelerating Net Zero” series will focus on infrastructure, with dates to be announced shortly.
- They concluded by reinforcing a key theme from the day: real progress will come not from silver bullets or isolated interventions, but from collective effort and sustained commitment across the entire transport ecosystem.



Please note: this summary is a non-verbatim account intended to capture the key themes and contributions from the discussion.