

Meeting: Transport for the North Chief Executive Consultation Call (Board)

Subject: Northern Transport Charter

Author: Lucy Jacques, Acting Head of Policy and Strategy

Sponsor: Tim Foster, Strategy and Programme Director

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 27 July 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 The Northern Transport Charter (NTC) was adopted by TfN Board in September 2020 following extensive work by a member led working group supported by officers. The NTC sets out a roadmap toward further, long-term devolution around four areas:

- Putting passengers at the heart of the railways
- Leading Northern strategic scheme planning and delivery
- Managing a long-term Northern funding settlement
- Championing an inclusive and sustainable North

1.2 Post adoption, the NTC sits alongside the statutory STP as the agreed 'blueprint' for how TfN can evolve as a body and the members aspirations for further devolution of powers and funding to TfN.

1.3 The 21/22 business plan identifies a number of activities that will further contribute to developing and embedding the NTC in our day-to-day activities with our current powers and resources. These were identified as those most likely to demonstrate tangible progress under current powers and funding arrangements.

1.4 KPI 20 defines the key activities we need to achieve to measure our success as follows. *Progress the advanced prioritisation mechanisms set out in the Northern Transport Charter, including analytical tools to allow prioritisation on a wider basis (economic, social, and decarbonisation) and independent assurance arrangements by March 2022.*

1.5 In the short term TfN is focusing on the activities which will add value and accelerate investment in transport schemes, focus on delivering evidence and analysis and embedding that within our own decision making processes, whilst influencing national government and delivery bodies to ensure that the North is fairly represented in investment decision making.

1.6 Development of detailed proposals to support these activities is overseen by the new NTC Members Working Group, which is made up of a delegation of TfN members and officers and met for the first time on 3rd June 2021.

1.7 This report provides members with an overview on the Charter development plans for financial year 21/22 and seeks Board approval to progress to the next stages of development as outlined in the TfN Business Plan.

2. Priority activities for 2021/22

2.1 Fundamentally there are three key elements to the proposed NTC development in FY 21/22.

1. **Demonstrate capability** selling our successes, developing delivery plans and demonstrating strengthened decision making.
2. **Telling the NTC story** increase awareness of the NTC and look to use opportunities to seek further endorsement of the Charter's aspirations.
3. **Defined activities** including further scoping, developing and piloting innovative approaches to support TfN, our partners and government make decisions differently

3. Demonstrating TfN capability

3.1 The NTC MWG have been clear that we need to build confidence in TfN's capability across decision making, prioritisation and evidence development. Key to this will be to draw together the examples of demonstrable progress across a number of TfN workstreams to demonstrate both achievement and capability building in the organisation. This will include collating case studies of where TfN has added real tangible value both to partners and national government to support us in telling the NTC story.

3.2 In addition to focusing on TfN's past successes there are also a number of current and planned activities that will enable TfN to demonstrate tangible progress as an organisation including the current focus on decarbonisation and freight, the work on Northern Powerhouse Rail, and our ground breaking analytical work. In responding to the Williams Shapps Plan for Rail, we have outlined the key capabilities and added value of TfN, generating a positive response from government. The key opportunities to demonstrate progress are set out in Annex 3 of this report.

4. Telling the NTC Story

4.1 Central to the NTC is how we tell a compelling story to partners, government and the public about what TfN does, how we add value but also our future aspirations and ambitions for the North. As such a

detailed Communications & Engagement plan has been worked up to support this work (Annex 2), the plan outlines a key aim of the work this year will be to increase awareness of the NTC and look to use opportunities to seek further endorsement of the Charter's aspirations.

4.2 In line with this the aims of the Engagement activity to support the NTC will therefore be to:

- Increase awareness of the Northern Transport Charter via TfN's external and internal channels, Member/partner engagement, and events, therefore encouraging people to attend the real/virtual events.
- Organise a series of well-attended virtual/real events, interventions, and meetings that garner agreement to NTC objectives.
- Execute well-planned interventions that grabbed the attention of key target groups and elicit support for NTC aspirations.

4.3 The "TfN Story" on the Northern Transport Charter will also inform and shape TfN's SR21 submission with a strong focus on recognising TfN's successes, capabilities and strengths. Should members approve the approach, delivery of the comms plan will get underway immediately working with members and their communications leads.

5. Defined Activities

5.1 At the heart of the NTC is how we champion an inclusive and sustainable North. Central to members thinking has been an ambition to make decisions differently to ensure any transport investment delivers the outcomes the North wants. Fundamental to doing this is the need to build evidence and agree a mechanism to prioritise and sequence our investment programme by weighting economic, social and environmental outcomes dependent on what TfN board deems the most important at any particular point of time.

5.2 In order for TfN Board to make those decisions there needs to be an evidence led process, informed by experts to ensure credibility but also supported by public participation, to ensure that any decisions made about future transport investment are influenced by those who will be directly impacted. Decisions need to reflect the views of the North's diverse population and much more can be done to ensure we consider the needs of different socio-economic groups.

5.3 To support the further development of our thinking and to embed the ethos of the NTC into TfN business as usual there are a number of activities identified as business plan priorities, we are now looking to progress throughout the next financial year including:

- **Developing and piloting a Citizens Assembly and Panel**, to engage the public in a more proactive way in the decision-making process.
- **Establishing an Independent Advisory Group**, drawing on external experts to provide bespoke advice to board on complex matters, providing additional robustness and credibility to the decision-making process.
- **Developing a Northern Appraisal Framework**, building on TfN's ground breaking analytical tools and evidence base to create an appraisal system that works for the North, which is consistent with and capable of undertaking appraisal against government's objectives but can also assess schemes and programmes against the TfN Board's objectives and preferred weighting of different outcomes.

Develop and Pilot Citizens Assembly and Panel

- 5.4 A Citizens' Assembly and/or Panel was one of the key proposals outlined in the NTC and identified in the business plan as an 2021/22 activity. Underpinning these processes is the concept of inclusivity: the panel should be open to all, regardless of political opinion, age, ethnicity or any other protected characteristic. Inclusivity aligns with many of TfN's aims and objectives. Through its collaborative and people focused approach, a citizens' assembly could support these ambitions.
- 5.5 As a first step, TfN commissioned Arup to undertake some initial scoping research to review existing examples and approaches and outline the key considerations for TfN. That review found there are largely two different approaches that exists for this type of deliberate decision making with the public, Citizens Assemblies and Citizens Panels, the main differences in these approaches are defined below.
- 5.6 Citizens Assemblies
- This approach uses the citizens to make policy recommendations to an authority through an intensive, deliberative process.
 - Activities often take place in person but can happen virtually.
 - Defined outputs such as policy recommendations are produced, and the commissioning authority is committed to responding to the outputs.
 - To ensure legitimacy, assemblies should be demographically representative.
 - They may also require oversight from stakeholders and expert advisors to ensure an unbiased process.
 - Assemblies of this type tend to be of between 25-150 people, so it is possible for them to come to a consensus.
 - They are time limited.
 - This approach is suitable for solving specific challenges, such as how to decarbonise the economy and forming rail passengers' priorities.

- Northern examples of this include Leeds Climate Commission and the North of Tyne Climate Assembly.

5.7 Citizens Panels

- This approach uses a panel as a standing body for consultation, learning and engagement purposes. Once convened, the panel can be asked to discuss a variety of issues.
- Activities take place mainly online and in a variety of forms.
- Outputs are not defined and the authority is not bound to respond to any recommendations. The outputs and workings of the panel can evolve over time to suit the needs of the authority.
- Such panels can be run less formally, with cheaper recruitment methods used.
- Panels of this type tend to be of 1,000 people plus, so as large a range of experiences can be gathered as possible.
- This approach is suitable for gaining input and oversight from the public, contributing to wider engagement strategies and strengthening understanding of lived experiences.
- An existing Northern example of this approach exists at Cheshire West & Chester Council.

5.8 There is merit in exploring both options as they both provide such different outputs and could be used to support TfN officers and boards in different ways. A panel could help shape the work programmes for the year ahead, as an online platform is more responsive and allows informal engagement for TfN officers to shape future activity. Whereas an assembly could support Board or Rail North Committee by providing a considered view from the citizens assembly as part of deliberate decision making. The assembly should be non-partisan and non-political but allow a litmus test of the views of citizens and customers of the transport network.

5.9 The research also emphasises the need for careful implementation and testing of these approaches before they are fully implemented within TfN. So, following completion of the initial scoping stage, we now propose to move onto the next stage to design and commission an appropriate pilot which we'll work with the NTC MWG to develop and implement this financial year.

5.10 By piloting a TfN Citizens Assembly and panel we will be testing how we can to empower citizens to play a proactive role in the TfN decision making process with the end output of the activity providing qualitative insight to inform policy recommendations, consequently providing an additional level of credibility to support Board decisions.

Establish an Independent Assurance / Advisory Group

5.11 Included as part of the proposed NTC governance structure and would see a more formal process put in place to convene independent expert

advice to support TfN Board on specific issues, this was included as another business plan priority for this financial year.

- 5.12 Initial scoping and informal conversations with the NTC MWG has found that this Independent Advisory Group would be best served as a research oversight group, working independently away from TfN and its authorities and giving academics and industry experts opportunity to review our work and make recommendations. TfN has already utilised these mechanisms before both to inform officer thinking through the Future Travel Scenarios but also to provide direct advice to Board as required (for example Richard George's review of the Manchester Piccadilly station options in 2020). We envisage that both approaches (proactive and reactive) could be used over time depending on the specifics of the decision.
- 5.13 A practical example of where this might be most useful this financial year would be to explore governments recent commitment to include aviation and shipping emissions in the UK transport decarbonisation target. The Board will need to consider how this could be reflected in the TfN Strategy currently out for consultation. Given the sensitive nature of this topic and the technical complexity of the issues and governance, it would be prudent to draw on external experts to provide additional advice to Board & TfN officers before we finalise our Decarbonisation Strategy. If members agree, we would develop this as a pilot and work with the MWG on embedding the approach into TfN.

Developing a Northern Appraisal Framework

- 5.14 As identified in paragraph 1.4 above this is a key performance indicator for TfN and partners this financial year, in addition to the KPI itself the business plan also outlines our commitment to:
- Develop and adopt our innovative analytical tools to target investments that, as well as supporting economic growth, address the need to deliver environmental, social and health benefits; as well as to
 - Take forward a developed Northern Investment Programme to lead strategic planning for the North, underpinned by compelling evidence.
- 5.15 TfN has now built the "**Northern Appraisal Framework**" envisaged in the NTC, and this is being applied in both Northern Powerhouse Rail and in the assessment of the TfN Investment Programme currently underway. The TfN tools and models fully represent the economic and environmental benefits from investing in the North's economy including mechanisms to better represent social and distributional impacts of transport investment. This is fundamental to the NTC's core focus of establishing a new and different way of making decisions to deliver better outcomes, improve investment decision making. It is aligned with the revised Treasury Green Book that puts strategic

objectives at the heart of decision making and place greater emphasis on wider evidence within appraisal.

- 5.16 Realising TfN's vision involves balancing a range of different outcomes, for example maximising economic growth, maximising inclusivity and minimising carbon. Scenario analysis is one way of highlighting the trade-offs that external forces may drive between such competing objectives and allow the development of strategies that successfully balance these trade-offs.
- 5.17 As a next step we are proposing to test weighted outcomes as part of the assessment of the TfN Investment Programme currently underway, which would provide additional illustrative scenarios that will help us consider how we may wish to prioritise and sequence the investment programme if required. It is intended this would be done alongside the IPBA assessment we are already planning to complete before the end of 2021/2 financial year.
- 5.18 A Northern Appraisal Framework using multi criteria analysis and weighted criteria in line with the Northern Transport Charter, would represent a significant step forward in evidence-based decision making and create a credible alternative to the approach currently taken by government. If successful it would add to the case for devolution and significantly strengthen our ability to sequence and prioritise investment decision making.
- 5.19 The weighting of outcomes requires significant member input and so we are proposing to facilitate a workshop with member working group to review and identify different options for weightings we can then test and present back for further consideration.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In summary the defined outputs of the NTC development plan for this financial year will:
- Pilot Citizens Assembly & Panel approaches to test what difference they might make to decision making
 - Establish an Independent Advisory Group to support Board in further exploring a specific complex topic such as Aviation to inform the final Decarbonisation Strategy
 - Further develop the Northern Appraisal Framework based on TfN's Analytical Framework that will enable further sequencing and prioritisation of the TfN Investment Programme following the completion of the Investment Programme .

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are asked to sign off the Comms & Engagement plan outlined in Appendix 2 to support the activities outlined in paragraph 4 regarding 'Telling the NTC story'.

- 7.2 Members are asked to consider the proposals in paragraph 5 and agree the high-level activities in paragraph 5.3 which will allow us to deliver at pace against KPI 20 in the Business plan.

8. Corporate Considerations:

Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The activities required in the year to March 2022 are included in the 2021/22 budget.

The TfN HR Team have confirmed there are no direct resource implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

- 8.2 The TfN Legal Team has confirmed that there are no new legal implications for TfN as a result of this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 8.3 A risk assessment is not required for the purpose of this report.

Environmental Implications

- 8.4 Not applicable at this point.

Equality and Diversity

- 8.5 Not applicable at this point.

Consultations

- 8.6 Not applicable at this point.

8. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Final Designed Northern Transport Charter, September 2020
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Draft NTC Comms & Engagement Plan, July 2021
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Summary of NTC commitments in TfN Business Plan, FY 21-22

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (*if applicable*)

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|----|------|---------------------------------------|
| a) | NTC | Northern Transport Charter |
| b) | STP | Strategic Transport Plan |
| c) | TfN | Transport for the North |
| d) | KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| e) | MWG | Members Working Group |
| f) | IPBA | Investment Programme Benefit Analysis |