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# NTC Communication & Engagement Strategy

## Introduction

Over the past 2 years, TfN has developed the Northern Transport Charter (NTC) which sets out the medium-long terms aspirations for the organisation and the region over the decade.

The next 12 months present opportunities to gain wider stakeholder support for these aspirations. This plan outlines the activities and approach that can best make use of these opportunities as well as maintain a drumbeat of support for this existing workstream.

## Overview

The NTC has already been approved by TfN Board and has already been through a significant amount of consultation with partners. However, there hasn't been a significant engagement with many northern interested groups, including MPs, senior government officials and agencies.

The purpose of the strategy is therefore not to amend the NTC but to raise the level of awareness of it among certain stakeholder groups and look to use opportunities to seek further endorsement (and hopefully adoption) of the Charter's aspirations.

This paper sets out the campaign strategy that TfN should adopt towards achieving the aims of the NTC. It essentially advocates a Members' led campaign in the first instance through a number of channels, including virtual/real events, media relations, website and social media, internal messaging.

But it also relies on a targeted engagement approach that creates an osmosis effect that influences senior Westminster based stakeholders and influencers, pulling them closer to TfN objectives while raising the prestige and influence of the organisation.

## Aims

In line with the purpose and remit, the aims of the Engagement activity 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.

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## Objectives

The key objective is to have the NTC implemented, however it is recognised that given the current context this might be an unrealistic short-term target. Therefore, more realistic strategic objectives will be to run well-targeted campaigns around specific events, publications and key-moments in the political cycle over the course of the next 10 months ensure:

- The NTC messages and aims reach all the necessary stakeholders to relevant engagement levels.
- There are high levels of support obtains positive support and endorsement, and provides a sound footing for activity in the next Business Plan.

## Engagement and Communications

### Overall Approach:

The activity is planned to commence across four phases:

- **Phase 1** – *Design and Approve*
- **Phase 2** – *Educate and Inform*
- **Phase 3** – *Influence and Change*
- **Phase 4** – *Review and Reset*

### Design and Approve

This is the process by which TfN officers and TfN Members, at the Members Working Group (MWG) meetings, will design and decide the approach for the work going forward across the year, setting the remit of the work and strategic objectives. This will involve evidence gathering and proposal drawn up by TfN Officers for consultation with the MWG, and conclude in approval by the TfN Board.

### Educate and Inform

There will begin a period of public promotion and explanation of the NTC. Promotion of the NTC will begin with a website landing page for the document on TfN's website and supportive content such as Insight, social media posts, and internal comms activities across TfN channels. Ongoing promotion will also involve Member-led events in their areas that target the local population via a mixture of online and in person events and interventions. These will be based on geographical spread of the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber nomenclature. This Phase will culminate in the TfN's Annual Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### Influence and Change

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This Phase will dovetail with Phase 2, but the emphasis will be looking to influence policymakers and change the opinions and policy towards NTC objectives. This will involve a mixture of events, such as TfN’s Annual Conference, but carry on through to the Party conference season via fringe events and meetings and will involve the use of Transport Across the North APPG (TANPG). The latter will hold events at Parliament and seek to obtain debates in the Chamber, and meetings with Ministers to make the case for NTC objectives.

This Phase will seek to influence events such as the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), expected between in the autumn between mid-October to mid-November - and will therefore align with TfN’s CSR campaign. It will also further seek to inform the DfT’s allocation of funding set out at the CSR expect to be announced by the end of December/start of January.

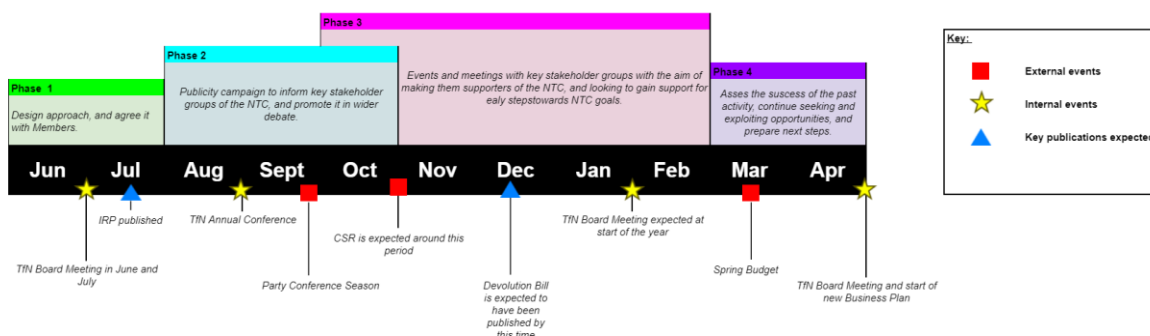
But it will also look to target the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) the Devolution Bill (DB), and their subsequent passages through Parliament in first half of 2022.

**Review and Reset**

The process of appraising this strategy will be ongoing throughout; nonetheless, towards the end of the February next year an assessment against the KPIs and the relevant metrics by which the success of the campaign will be decided will begin. The aim will be to look to learn from best practice over previous 10 months and help to inform the Business Plan for the next FY and how NTC objectives can be further advanced in that period.

**Timeline:**

The period of activity will be from June 2020 up to April 2021 when there will be a new Business Plan in place at TfN. Therefore, the phases set out above will be laid out across this period as show below:



**Audiences:**

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There is a large audiences pool that will be engaged through the delivery of this plan; however, there are different audience that will need to be reached in different ways and to differing levels, based upon their level of interest and level of influence.

Therefore, as a result they will be targeted in different ways to ensure that the most effective methods of communication are employed.

These audiences will include but are not limited to:

- Members and partners – Delivery partners, LEP representatives and Local/Combined Authority representatives
- Regional and trade media
- General public
- Stakeholders (including businesses and relevant stakeholder groups, such as climate change and transport interest groups)
- MPs/Peers including advocates identified through the political advocacy programme
- TfN Employees

#### **Internally to TfN colleagues**

- Ensure all colleagues, including OBT, are familiar with the key messages of the strategy and feel comfortable communicating them with the public/partners to encourage them to submit their responses.
- Encourage colleagues to share details of the NTC via their own channels/relationships.

#### **Internally to Members and partners**

- Ensure Members and partners are fully briefed and encouraged to promote the NTC through their networks to encourage participation.
- Help with the organising of Member-led events and initiatives for promotion in their localities.
- Aim to involved Members as message carriers at Westminster-based events and meetings that target key groups.

#### **Externally to stakeholders:**

- To ensure that stakeholders (including the business community, media and Westminster politicians) are aware of the NTC and its progression, including its aims, time, date and location, through regular updates.
- Encourage enthusiasm amongst stakeholders of the objectives of the NTC and its significance to their North.
- Encourage stakeholders to promote the NTC through their networks emphasising its relevance and importance to their industry and the North.

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- Ensure each NTC event runs smoothly with no/minor disruption.
- Ensure content is informative and engaging and stakeholders find the sessions useful.

**Externally to the public**

- Ensure the NTC events (e.g. #TfNTalks) are promoted in good time ahead of schedule through a range of communications channels to ensure maximum reach.
- Ensure information around the NTC is easily accessible on TfN digital channels.
- Ensure information around the NTC is communicated in clear, concise and, where possible, non-technical language and tone.
- Achieve local and national press interest in the NTC, and different initiatives and events.
- Ensure content is informative and engaging and stakeholders find the sessions useful.

**Stakeholder Analysis**

There will be a full stakeholder list assembled for campaign activity. These stakeholders will be assessed based upon their level of interest and influence towards the objective of this campaign, based on the below:

**Targeting**

The many stakeholder groups that make up our target audience are asses in the below manner:

Target Groups by Tier (T)	
T1	Senior members of the government, and senior civil servants at relevant government departments (HMT, DfT, MHCLG), and their close advisers and associates.
T2	The 158 Northern MPs who will be able to act as advocates for TfN to help influence policymakers and raise the level of awareness at Westminster.
T3	Opinion formers such as journalists, think tanks, high-profile business and civic figures.
T4	Northern based third sector groups, service users, general public, business community who have low direct influence, and low constant interest levels.

**Engaging**

The level of engagement that the different Tiers of stakeholders receive and rise to is equally important, their level of engagement will be assessed as below:

Levels (L) of engagement	
L1	<b>Aware:</b> They are receiving TfN campaign collateral, but it is not yet clear whether they are also engaging with our communications.

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L2	<b>Inquisitive:</b> They are acknowledging our communications and agreeing to set up meetings or asking for more information.
L3	<b>Active:</b> They are attending our events, privately supportive or open to our arguments, and not ruling out publicly supporting our objectives and/or using our messages – ultimately they’re actively involved in the campaign.

### Key messages

See supplementary document.

### Communication methods

The broad communications and engagement plan tactics and approach are highlighted as follows:

#### Media:

- Tailored, where applicable, local press releases announcing NTC launch and including reference to NTC events.
- Interview opportunities to be offered with Members, and TfN CEO and Chair.
- Op-ed/guest articles in appropriate regional and trade, and national websites and press.
- Further releases as reminders during NTC activity period of special events.
- Looking to provide NTC takes on relevant news stories, and providing NTC spokespeople for externally organised debates and seminars.
- NTC update and further supporting evidence, and summary CSR report to be issued via press release and media launch event.
- Key NTC intervention around TfN’s Annual Conference, and collateral for the Party Conference Season and the TANPG Parliamentary events.
- Joint letters with business community and other key stakeholders supporting the NTC.

#### Members/Partners:

- Member support to be arranged via direct contact with our LTA comms partners – to harness their involvement by offers such as: comments in press releases, Insight articles, sharing on their own channels, taking part in media opportunities, sharing of infographics and NTC content on social platforms.
- Member communications to take place before, during and after the NTC to support discussions at government level meetings – including through Member Digests, direct briefings as appropriate, 1-on-1s.

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### **Key stakeholders:**

- All Points North – updates before, during and after the NTC period with an emphasis on encouraging stakeholders to promote the NTC through their networks and submit their responses.
- Email invitations (relevant stakeholder groups, MPs and Peers, businesses, council leaders and portfolio holders) – general information linking people to the NTC website to encourage sharing of strategy and NTC website through their networks, including social media
- Targeted roundtables with key stakeholder groups.
- Requesting 1-on-1 meetings with snr Tier 1 stakeholders and TfN officers and Members.

### **External/events:**

- Real/virtual events with a place-based approach eg. North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, and North East – depending on Covid restrictions.
- Drop-in sessions hosted at Party Conferences and TfN Annual Conference, from a either in person or virtual exhibition portal (depending on Covid restrictions) through which respondents can also provide their feedback and ask questions.
- Transport Across the North APPG at least 2 sessions with parliamentarians, including an invitation to the relevant Minister(s); there will be one ahead of the CSR and one following it; with the aim to obtain a debate in the Chamber on the NTC at some point in this period.
- #TfNTalks webinar(X3), including an invitation to the relevant Minister, which aim to inform and educate about different aspects of the NTC.
- 'TfN Podcast' episodes (X3) over the next 10 months with relevant contributors explaining the NTC and providing updates on the campaign.

### **Internal:**

- TeamTalks briefing during Phase 2 prior to the CSR to promote it to colleagues and answer any questions so they can encourage their connections to take part.
- Full details of NTC to be shared in bulletins and on intranet.
- Updates at appropriate stages to be shared in bulletin.

### **Digital and social:**

- Dedicated page on the TfN website including details about the NTC and link to the document.
- Regular sharing of information on TfN's social media channels – just before launch, on the week of launch, around each event, and at appropriate milestones.

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- Frequently commissioned Insight pieces from TfN Members, and relevant representatives on the TfN Partnership Board, and relevant TfN officers to ensure a steady drumbeat of online activity over the next 10 months.

## Budget

It is proposed that the activity prior to end of April 2022 will be funded through the existing SECT budget during 21/22. It is expected that the Strategy business plan and budget will make an allocation for costs associated with running the NTC C&M activity – for example procurement of an agency and further design work if required – with comms requirements, dependent on the scope, explored through the SECT business plan and budget.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

<b>Member endorsement of NTC goals and approach</b>	<b>KPI 1</b>	To ensure that by the end July all TfN Board Members agree with goals of the NTC campaign.
<b>Secure parliamentarians in support of the NTC</b>	<b>KPI 2</b>	To secure the support of the majority of northern MPs for the NTC and to have had contact or involvement with them over this 10-month period.
<b>Compile market research on external perceptions of TfN</b>	<b>KPI 3</b>	Commission market research on external views of TfN. The content of this work to be consulted with core TfN Board Members by the end of the first year, and used to help promote “asks”, if possible.
<b>Increased media and social media footprint</b>	<b>KPI 4</b>	There should be large increase in the NTC’s social media reach, with CSR related content generated and published online building on current levels of interactions and views.
<b>National News cycle Recognition</b>	<b>KPI 5</b>	Over the course of the 10-month period, to have held an event or constructed an intervention that has allowed the NTC to achieve coverage in national media platforms from broadcast to print media.
<b>The holding of events, both regionally and in London</b>	<b>KPI 6</b>	Organise the majority of the event outlined above to a decent standard, garnering positive feedback.



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## Dependencies and risks

Below is a brief overview of some, although not all, the main risks to the strategy and suggested mitigations.

<b>Dependency/Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
The timeline shifts	SECT, in regular contact with Strategy to stay abreast of any shifts in timing. campaigns initiatives to be developed in advance so ready to use when needed.
Criticism for not holding a NTC event at a specific location	Response: Due to social distancing/lockdown rules and/or the ongoing risks associated with in-person events, TfN decided to proceed with a hybrid approach of real and virtual events to ensure the NTC workstream could continue. Work with LTA comms partners on approach to avoid potential criticism in local areas.
Low turnout at events	Ensure all events are promoted in good time via a number of channels as outlined in this plan.
External criticism/reputational risk on content of the strategy	Careful management and comms protocols in place – supporting FAQs and briefing documents available.

## Evaluation

The overall aim of this plan is to raise the awareness and support for the NTC; therefore, the main evaluation will look at achieving the target number of engagements and supporters over the course of the C&M activity period. This can be evidenced by how many of our Tier 1 stakeholders are at engagement Level 3.

Further evaluation measures to show that the various elements of the plan have been rolled out successfully:

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### **Internal**

- Feedback from OBT
- Intranet and internal forum discussion platforms.
- Understanding and awareness of NTC inside TfN and Partner organisations.

### **External**

- Local media response and evaluation of overall coverage
- Key stakeholder feedback – anecdotal, documented and via social media
- Feedback from partners – anecdotal and documented
- Digital metrics such as click through rates from All Points North, website stats and blogs, social media statistics, Google trends etc.