

1. Chief Executives Update

- 1.1. To provide the opportunity for the Chief Executive to update the Board on matters arising from the previous meeting, as well as any other significant issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Quarterly Operating Report

- 2.1. The Executive produce a Quarterly Operating Report the purpose of which is to provide an update on progress against the milestones set out in the Business Plan. The QOR is presented to and discussed at the Audit and Governance Committee as part of their regular cycle of meetings. It is also provided to this meeting for information.

3. TfN Conference

- 3.1. The 5th TfN Conference was held in Liverpool on 5th February. The conference, which was sold out, saw TfN Members, partners, and stakeholders come together in a shared agenda: the importance of the North's transport system as an enabler of sustainable growth.
- 3.2. Drawing on the technical work that underpins the revised Strategic Transport Plan, the conference explored the need for change in the way we plan, develop, and implement solutions that meet the needs of the North's residents and businesses. The importance of having clarity on funding, together with an approach to appraisal that better reflects the needs of the North were key messages throughout the day.
- 3.3. Workshop sessions enabled attendees to explore a range of topics in more detail, with the workshop on buses particularly popular. Other workshops covered the transformation of the North's rail system, the role of the North's global gateways, the importance of transforming the North's inclusivity, measures needed to help transform the North's economy, and the need to decarbonise the North's transport system.
- 3.4. A lunchtime session focused on how to transform the diversity in transport was popular and was recorded as a podcast that is now available.
- 3.5. The conference closed with Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP (who is also the lead for devolution within the DfT) addressing the gathering. Responding to questions from the audience the Minister expressed his support for getting the electrification of the Midland Main Line through all the way through to Sheffield: TfN continues to

work with colleagues in the East Midlands and Midlands Connect to support the case for this investment, including letters of support where appropriate.

- 3.6. Feedback on the 2024 conference has been very positive, and planning for 2025 has already begun. After visiting Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle in the past, the intention is that next year's conference will be held in York.

4. Other Conferences

- 4.1. Early spring has been a popular time for conferences more generally. The end of February saw the 3rd Sub-national Transport Bodies Conference being held as part of the wider Interchange Event at Manchester Central, with TfN's work on EV Charging Infrastructure and Transport Related Social Exclusion amongst the featured work, together with the work of TAME.
- 4.2. The same week also saw the Convention of the North held in Leeds, with over 800 Political and Business leaders coming together to support a manifesto for the North. The TfN executive worked closely in support of the Convention's transport theme. This ensured that the Convention could draw on the evidence assembled in support of the STP, including the recently updated Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (completed in partnership with the NP11).
- 4.3. The Convention organisers worked in partnership with Citizen's UK to enable 60 young people from across the North to be involved in the discussions and workshops. Their involvement brought energy and a fresh perspective and added greatly to the debates.

5. Diversity

- 5.1. TfN Board members have highlighted the importance of having diversity of thinking, not just at the heart of its meeting but as a core part of the way TfN goes about its work.
- 5.2. The TfN executive discussed this issue further with the Chair and Vice-Chairs in early January. Whilst they recognised the work that already takes place to encourage diversity of thought, they identified several opportunities for doing more in this respect, including:
 - Expanding our Citizens Panel (Northern Voices) – established in 2023 with 600 residents whose membership reflects the diversity and geography of the North, our 24/25 Business Plan makes

provision to expand this to 2000 members, thereby enabling us to explore in more depth the views of specific groups

- Actively seek to invite representative groups/bodies to be involved in TfN meetings so that they can be part of policy debates, such as the accessibility workstream
- Establish a stakeholder forum – through which TfN can actively engage with organisations, national and local charities, as well as other bodies that speak for groups in society, and in that way ensure TfN’s work and its advice to Government is informed by their perspective
- Specifically invite representatives to either share feedback directly with the Board and/or attend Board to offer views and perspectives on key issues
- Invite infrastructure owners and service providers to TfN meetings to hear first-hand feedback on the user experience and to explain what they are doing to address issues raised

To support these, strengthened governance arrangements are being put in place to ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are an integral part of work prepared for the Board.

In addition, the TfN executive, led by the Chief Executive, remains committed to ensure that as an employer our HR process encourages the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. Feedback collected through the recent staff engagement survey suggests that this is bearing fruit, but it remains a focus for the leadership team.

6. Road Investment – A66

- 6.1. The proposal to dual the A66 has been a long-standing priority for TfN. A nationally significant investment in the North’s road system, the improvement will improve east-west connectivity, specifically improving connections between Cumbria, Durham, North Yorkshire and the Tees Valley.
- 6.2. TfN supported the Development Consent Order submitted by National Highways and set out the strategic importance of the scheme to the ensuing Inquiry.
- 6.3. The Secretary of State confirmed the Order for the scheme on 7th March. This decision is to be strongly welcomed, signalling as it does the Government’s commitment to deliver the improvement.

TfN will continue to work with National Highways as it now takes the scheme forward.

7. Local Transport Funds

- 7.1. The Government's Network North policy document set out its intention to provide longer-term funding clarity for those areas not already covered by devolution deals. Late February saw the Government set out in more detail its proposals for Local Transport Funds.
- 7.2. The move towards longer-term funding clarity is something that TfN has been arguing for and so the funding is to be welcomed. However, as the interest in the 'TfN Offer' shows there remains a serious shortfall in terms of skills and capacity within the sector to develop and bring forward specific proposals. The 24/25 Business Plan for TfN continues to prioritise supporting its partners, however this is itself limited at present by the funding available: the issue of skills and capacity is likely to be an area of interest as we begin to look to develop proposals for a future spending review.

8. Spending Review

- 8.1. TfN's funding settlement for 24/25 coincides with the end of the current public sector spending settlement, meaning that a spending review can be expected in the near future. The timing of such a review, and the basis on which it is conducted have yet to be determined. However, it is important that TfN begins developing its proposal and to that end the TfN executive will work with TfN Board members (and their officers) to develop a proposition for consideration at a future meeting.

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