

# Future of Mobility in Counties

## Smart Mobility Roundtables 25 June 2020

### Consultation

This report documents the tenth in a series of roundtable discussions organised by the Smart Mobility Unit at the University of Hertfordshire and sponsored by Department for Transport and others. The format was a 120 minute virtual meeting via WebEx due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

#### 1.0 Participants

There were 28 participants in total. Sectors represented were: national, sub-regional and local government, non-departmental public body, mobility provider, transport consultancy, academic research, and non-governmental organisations. Stephen Joseph chaired the discussion.

#### 2.0 Aim

The purpose of the roundtable was to explore the following questions:

- How can people and communities be engaged in decisions about the future of transport, especially now in responses to Covid?
- Many counties have articulate and professional people, organised in residents' associations, civic societies, neighbourhood councils and others. How can these be included in decisions about future mobility so they feel engaged and involved but without them dominating?
- How can others - of all ages and backgrounds - be involved?

#### 3.0 Papers and links circulated in advance

##### Presentations

Kris Beuret, SRA	What have I learned about public engagement?
James Gleave, Mobility Lab	Engaging Citizens in the Future of Mobility
Nathan Koren, Podaris	Consultation, Public Engagement and the Future of Transport Planning
Mike Saunders, Commonplace	Digital Engagement and Covid-19

##### Papers

Rachael Brydges, James Gleave and Anna Rothnie (2020), *Barriers to a Community Paradigm in Transport – A Discussion Paper*, *Mobility Lab UK* (<https://www.mobilitylab.org.uk/toolset.html#/>)

Nathan Koren (2020), *Transport Planning in a Pandemic and Beyond*, Podaris (<https://blog.podaris.com/pandemic-planning/>)

#### 4.0 Presentations

##### 4.1 Kris Beuret

Taking the Devil's advocate approach, Kris presented an avowedly cynical view of public engagement especially for transport policy and planning.

There is a well known model of engagement from the 1960s called the ladder of participation<sup>1</sup>, which suggests levels of engagement from manipulation to full citizen control. The top three levels, partnership, delegated powers and citizens control are very rare indeed in the working world, especially in transport. The reasons for this are many.

---

<sup>1</sup> Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224

- In the UK we have a strong inclination to favour the 18th Century view of representative democracy promoted by Edmund Burke<sup>2</sup>, which can be summed up as 'we voted for them so leave it to them to sort out'.
- Transport is a technical issue. Technical arguments can be used to rule out participation. An example is road safety audits where a traffic engineer can refuse to implement clearly revealed pedestrian desire lines for a crossing on the basis of safety policies.
- There is a strong tendency to only hear from the 'usual suspects'.
- Lack of experience. We cannot simply assume that any junior staff member can do engagement well just because they happen to have a few friends in a young demographic who can give an opinion.
- Public innumeracy. The polls are not representative. Ultimately when you scratch beneath the surface of polling, you discover that people are paid to take part and groups are screened multiple times to achieve a very carefully selected sample.
- It is expensive to do public engagement well.

SRA have worked over many years with Highways England, DfT and other government bodies and produce a bespoke toolkit to make their techniques available to the public. Success depends on strategic thinking beforehand so that it is clear to all parties what their role in the process is, whether advisory or as an influencer.

The Collective Impact Model<sup>3</sup> is very good and does better in achieving a higher level of engagement than other approaches. The core elements are: a common agenda; shared measurement; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; backbone of support.

This is the approach is used by Lambeth Black Thrive<sup>4</sup>. Heathrow Airport used the approach with some success. However, even here things can go wrong, when conflict can arise between groups which feel they should get more or special treatment.

Road User charging is a good case study to consider. There have been surveys on this for at least thirty years. You can determine the output of a survey according to the questions asked, the techniques used, choice of language, the options on offer, taking an individual or social focus, whether you tell people you are aiming for a majority or a consensus view. You can use behavioural insights to nudge people into certain opinions. You can select the sample to determine a certain outcome.

To conclude, there are major challenges in seeking public engagement. Even if you use all the best approaches, where there is a great deal of conflict in a community, you can find opposing factions uniting against the investigator. As a sign that there are problems with public engagement, reflect on how often it is properly reviewed or audited, as happens with other work in transport?

#### 4.2 James Gleave

James gave an overview of how local authorities, public sector bodies and other actors in mobility are currently conducting engagement and how they could improve.

People think that if the methodology is more engaging and on an attractive platform, then all will be well. This overlooks the fundamental process and ethos of the engagement process.

We have a cycle of poor engagement, with traditional consultation channels at the core where only the keener citizens respond, the results are analysed and the view is partial and provides the same key messages over and over again. This leads to a cycle of cynicism. The local community typically hears nothing and sees no point in engagement. The local authority feels they don't want to consult only to hear from the usual suspects yet other approaches are difficult and expensive. This results in much miscommunication on all sides.

---

<sup>2</sup> " Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion". The Works of Edmund Burke Vol 1, 1834

<sup>3</sup><https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2019/03/11/what-is-collective-impact/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/initiatives/black-thrive> <https://www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/>

In rural areas the stakeholder pattern is more complex. There will be many people who we typically overlook or don't know how to engage, such as businesses and landowners of all kinds who need not even be local. These are important when looking at new rights of way or a cycle path in a rural setting. Transport professionals tend to talk the language of specialists and transport operators.

Businesses are always difficult to engage. There will also be community groups from competing sectors. If you can get a good understanding of the relevant stakeholders and map them properly, and understand their needs from the beginning, this can lead to a much more meaningful and engaging consultation exercise. It will also avoid wasting time on traditional methods of engagement. So upfront work pays off.

In a rural setting the context is complex. Meaningful engagement is hard, complex and needs to be dynamic, as opinions will change. But this is life. People's positions change over time. They will respond to some methods and not others. You need to build trust with the key representatives. In communities you can't just come in and have it all done in an eight week process.

A one-off project to satisfy the legal minimum of consultation will not deliver the results. You need a big investment of time, in a more meaningful way and build up an understanding over time, then results will be more valid and people will give you more information. Not everyone will get their heart's desire but they will understand and respect what emerges. Your attitude, approach and consultation methods are more important than the technology for getting meaningful engagement.

Key questions to ask are:

- Who don't you know about? How will they be affected by the change proposed? And how will you engage them?
- What decision making authority are you willing to give up?  
This needn't be ceding 100% control to others. But you must understand the power dynamics involved. Are you seeking to collect data or permission to deliver a pre-determined scheme or is there scope for a collaborative project?
- When someone asks 'how will my input change what you ultimately do?' you, need to have an answer. This is very important to help people understand how their contribution will be valued, otherwise they won't contribute.

#### *Covid-19 and consultation*

This has been a unique time for transport planning and delivery. It has provided useful insights and experiments in the field of public engagement. It is disappointing to note that engagement has either been ignored or it has been abstractive in practice. Tools like Commonplace and Streetbuilder have sourced ideas from the public but there has been no process for feeding back from to show what has been done with the input. The process has been very one-way.

On temporary changes to street infrastructure for social distancing, county councils have actually been gloating that they have not had to consult. Although the measures are important it is not a good indication of the local authority mindset that they are pleased not to have to consult.

Digital platforms are very good to bridge the gap with traditional meetings and engagement processes. Some zoom meetings have been very good with panels and participation groups, but this excludes people with no or poor internet or those with internet but who struggle to use the technology.

Also during Covid-19 lockdown there is genuine innovation to be found in the offline engagement which has been necessary because people want to keep the conversation going but still observe the 2m distancing rules. There are some very good examples of creativity in the arts and culture sector. A very effective community noticeboard in Nottingham sprung up over a weekend to advertise local businesses and ask people's views on street enhancements, allowing people to pin up their ideas. People have been using walls and fences to state how they feel. In one case people were putting post it notes around their village with examples of improvements people want to see. Will the Covid-19 experience lead to a situation where instead of

consulting in the old ways on digital platforms we are committed to talk more with people and do the hard work required to get better engagement?

#### 4.3 Nathan Koren

Transport planning uses three main approaches: forecasting, scenario planning and 'decide and provide'. Forecasting tends to be good on quantification but it is a black box approach and is not goal oriented. Forecasting accounts for uncertainty by providing a spread of outcomes around a central prediction but if the model fails this approach can go badly wrong. It cannot account for black swan events. Scenario planning focusses on uncertainty by looking for more robust or more agile plans. It is often unclear how to choose between them but at least there is more situational awareness than with a forecasting approach. Decide and provide delivers more of the same based on current desires.

Each of these planning approaches need to be borne in mind when embarking on consultation and engagement. Forecasting has an aura of scientific respectability because it appears to be objective but it is not transparent and leaves the public feeling excluded. It is hard to feed public feedback which is usually subjective, into a quantitative forecasting model.

We need to be open to change. Developing scenarios can incorporate a feedback loop and thereby helps make the process more transparent to stakeholders.

'Decide and provide' can be good as it is actual co-creation, but there is a problem with it because people's desires are often limited by what they already have. You need to help people get out of their comfort zones. For feedback to work transport planners need to be agile in their response, which is uncommon. Decide and provide needs hard data.

So we need to use a mix of all three planning approaches and iterate between them. Rapid iterations are good.

How to do better? Increase the agility in each step in the project lifecycle. There are usually big gaps between steps, with losses in tacit knowledge at each stage. And the different disciplines in transport planning use separate tools from each other and none of their processes are transparent to each other. So even the experts rarely collaborate well with each other let alone with the public.

Buckminster Fuller said: "If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking."

Podaris is a platform for engineering planning and engagement so you can work in a fast and free flowing way. It allows the users to improve consultation and engagement processes with an interface for non-experts to interact in real time as schemes are going through in the design process. It is an emerging digital ecosystem for everyone to work together and collaborate between disciplines.

Challenges to address:

- Digital collaboration tools like Commonplace are the future but if they are separate from the expert disciplines we need to change that.
- The digital divide is a big problem.
- How can we avoid the natural dynamic of online communities which involves limbic stimulation cycle of cat videos and outrage?

#### 4.4 Mike Saunders

The aim is to accelerate change and work with the private sector and local authorities. As a social impact company we decided to make Commonplace free for local authorities to use during the Covid-19 emergency response planning and we had a very good uptake. Around fifty local authorities are now using the tool. Many individuals took part, most urban (particularly in London and the North West) but also some in rural areas.

Commonplace accepts that digital is a tonic, not a panacea. It is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for good community engagement. There are three key areas where digital tools help:

- i) building trust by being open
- ii) developing a shared understanding of need
- iii) accelerating collaboration and change

### *Trust*

Using digital technology can prove that there are lots of people in the conversation, so people can understand that participation is not futile. It can help to bring other people in, younger people especially. In a consultation in Lewisham, South East London, a third of respondents suggested closing a street completely to cars as part of the solution. This would not be a likely response in a rural setting.

### *Shared understanding*

From heat map data you can build a view of a community with potentially a very rich data set. In Lewisham, there were 20,000 people engaging with the site. In Bath and North East Somerset, an authority which is very rural in places, three thousand people engaged. Most were concerned about social distancing and the problems of speeding traffic causing danger for walking and cycling.

### *Accelerating collaboration*

Commonplace in Levenshulme, Manchester, allowed people to move beyond a knee-jerk reaction towards a more collaborative position. In Perthshire, with some rural communities, digital tools were used to show a 'before and after' view of streetscapes using crowdsourced information.

Waltham Forest an urban scheme was divided into village scale community projects and received over 20,000 responses with over 50,000 people involved. The result has been an improvement in air quality and people have taken the conversation offline to take active roles in caring for new park spaces.

## 5.0 Overview of discussion

Detailed comments from the spoken dialogue and the live chat are recorded in section 6.

### 5.1 Good practice

There was a discussion about approaches, models and tools. Several participants emphasised the importance of long term engagement as a worthwhile investment to increase the community's trust in the local authority. There are tools and strategies to enable difficult discussions; attitudes are dynamic so can change as a result of engagement. If councils can loosen control over the terms of the debate and consult people earlier in the transport planning process then engagement will be more meaningful. It was accepted that many transport schemes are so long term that it is difficult to involve people early enough to affect outcomes significantly. Participants suggested that Commonplace is a valuable tool and could be improved with a facility to provide feedback on routes as well as point locations.

### 5.2 Challenges for the transport sector

There are ways to engage people who currently feel no need to use their cars less. This can include understanding their issues and priorities and talking about the wider climate, health and social benefits of modal shift. It is very helpful that the public has experienced the benefits of safer streets and cleaner air during the Covid-19 lockdown. Consulting on service delivery is different to asking people about physical infrastructure changes. It is important to find ways to reveal unmet need as well as consult existing users. Journey planning tools can allow people to understand how proposed changes would affect their day to day lives. Satnavs were suggested as a way to reach people who don't use journey planners.

### 5.3 Challenges of rural engagement

Participants from deep rural communities explained that priorities for consultation and engagement in these settings differ completely from other geographies. Transport services are mostly community transport schemes run by volunteers and there are typically no infrastructure projects. It is therefore very important not to raise unrealistic expectations. There is a complex range of stakeholders to consider, some of whom are physically absent. Rural poverty, poor broadband and mobile coverage reinforce the digital divide. Teenagers

are particularly disadvantaged. Consultation can often serve to help people discover what services are available and reveal how to use existing local assets and services better.

#### 5.4 Local authority constraints and opportunities

Engagement and consultation are constrained by local authority staff, funding and skills shortages. Sometimes the short timescales to obtain funding prevent consultation. At the other extreme, some schemes are so long term that proposals are either too abstract to engage people or the consultation is at a late stage, when there is little that will be meaningfully changed as a result. There was a range of views on the subject of councillors overruling the public. Parish and town councils are well placed to engage the public in areas outside cities.

#### 5.5 Covid-19 case study

A county council representative described imposing temporary street redesign in towns as emergency public health measures for Covid-19 and the vocal but mixed response from the public. There are plans to work with behavioural scientists to understand the public response to the measures. Most participants were impressed at the bold decision to go ahead without consultation. Experimentation is helpful since people are rarely given a chance to try out a new street layout before deciding what they think about it. Behavioural data and consultation responses informed by direct experience are more compelling than attitudes based on abstract proposals. Living Labs are a way to extend this experimental approach much further.

#### 5.6 Levers for large scale behaviour change

The transport profession can deliver substantial change by working differently within the existing planning framework. Professional bodies have called for new methodology for transport appraisal and assessment. There is a great deal of good practice and existing guidance to draw upon so there is no need to reinvent the wheel. The concept of a 'people-centred business case' was met with enthusiasm.

The climate emergency has led to discussions with local authorities about how to build political consent for action. A long term approach to engagement gives politicians a better understanding of people's aspirations, needs and priorities which builds trust and enables action.

Covid-19 may offer a uniquely powerful 'limbic trigger' to motivate people to change their transport habits, especially having experienced low traffic neighbourhoods under lockdown.

There was support for the plea raised by one participant for a celebrity to advocate for change in the style of David Attenborough on plastics.

### 6.0 Detailed notes of Discussion by Roundtable Participants

The following abbreviations indicate the sector making comments:

ACAD Academic

NDPB Non-departmental public body

NGO Non-governmental organisation

CONS Consultant

CC County council

DEV Developer

PRO Professional transport institution

REGG Regional transport body

GOV National government.

MOB Mobility services

[CHAT] denotes written contributions made in real time during the spoken dialogue.

[...] other comments in square brackets indicate the context of the comment

## 6.1 Good Practice and tools

### *Models of engagement*

NGO1:[CHAT] We have always disagreed fundamentally with the Arnstein ladder - old and very misleading. !!! Provocative I know ...

ACAD1:[CHAT] There has been a lot of work updating, critiquing and expanding Arnstein's ladder since it was published in the 1960s. It is worth exploring some of these advances in any discussion of this area,

NGO1:[CHAT] I agree

CONS6:[CHAT] The fundamental point that proper engagement is rare is a fair one

ACAD1:[CHAT] We teach students of planning on engagement theory and practice at our UH Sustainable Planning Masters where we explore critically this area. It reinforces the point that practitioners may not be aware of the methodological possibilities available, what is appropriate in what circumstances, how to bring in virtual aspects and need to situate this in terms of democratic engagement rather than as an instrumental activity.

### *Long term approach - building trust*

DEV:[CHAT] We have used Charrettes in the past<sup>5</sup>, which are much more long term collaborations and encourage communities to engage with the development in different ways and consider both issues of detail and the bigger picture. This document outlines the approach we used - before my time I might add!

PRO:[CHAT] The TPS, CIHT, Royal College of Art plus others are about to start a project engaging with 3 different communities working with them as well as their local authority to talk about their vision for the future, in the context of local values, attitudes and opportunities as a very different type of engagement.

NGO2:[CHAT] In our NGO we're interested in democratic consent and engage with politicians primarily in order to work out how to create the conditions for change (and less directly with each intervention itself). From my point of view, I wonder if the difficulty of implementing rapid change during this crisis is a reflection of the low amount of ongoing discussion that has been going on in the months/years beforehand.

NGO2:[CHAT] Consultation and engagement is for life, not just for Christmas (or a bike lane)... sorry for the lame joke, but I think it is true.

### *Working with disagreement*

CHAIR: Developer raised a good point in CHAT about what if people really don't want to change, they are content with their car-based status quo?

NGO1: A question to think about is, the DfT Decarbonisation paper published before Covid19 flagged up subjects which will be a headache to implement, eg the shift to EVs and cycleways. It was good news but still expect local and community opposition. We need safe spaces for dialogue that is fulfilling the legal duty to consult and includes new approaches to consultation.

NGO1:[CHAT] Has anyone looked at the Government's (pre-COVID) Paper on de-carbonisation of transport and the enormous implications that will require behaviour change and engagement?

CONS1: On the question of how to get big change in behaviour in response to the decarbonisation agenda, there will be pushback to the whole concept but we should not try to convince these people, be open and honest and demonstrate integrity of the process and that will help win over people that you want on your side. There are more people out there who support decarbonisation than you think. If the outcome of consultation is seen to be pre-determined it makes the job of trust building much harder.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gascoynececil.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/S-S-Pre-Charrette-Paper-For-Website.pdf>

CONS1:[CHAT] Bear in mind that engaging with people who you disagree with IS engagement. The approach should then be asking how you make things better, and open up the debate more. Make sure that they do not dominate the debate. Take part in the debate! How many people reply positively and explain schemes that are posted on local Facebook Groups for example? Engage!

CC1:[CHAT] Agree with CONS1

NGO1:[CHAT] It's often about managing trade-offs - and for that you must provide a safe space for a dialogue.

CONS1:[CHAT] The point that I was trying to make was around making the engagement relevant to those who you are looking to engage with. This is not about method. It is about understanding who you are looking to talk to, understanding their context, and understanding their motivations and how they work with others. Then you choose the methods by which you engage with them.

*Discretion - who defines the parameters of consultation?*

ACAD1:[CHAT] Reflecting on Kris's presentation, we need to think about who defines what the topic of the engagement is. If we really sign up to co-design processes all who have a legitimate interest need to define what they are exploring together.

CONS6:[CHAT] Agree with ACAD1

NGO1:[CHAT] Until decision-makers restrict their discretion, much of the more ambitious promises of engagement will disappoint.

ACAD1:[CHAT] Enjoying James's presentation but comment here flows from previous comments in chat function. I'm nervous that if we privilege housing as some kind of separate category of need (rather than making new or retrofitting existing places) we will fail to define what is needed effectively so any engagement on aspects such as movement and accessibility compromised. Also if it's 'as much housing as possible as fast as possible', engagement may well go by the board as situated as an impediment to delivery = car dependent rural and suburban sprawl?

ACAD1:[CHAT] I should also give a shout out to Look! St Albans a community-led voice on design.

*Commonplace Q&A*

CONS5: Concerned about the limits to Commonplace for collecting feedback on areas or linear routes where change needs to happen as opposed to individual locations. Locally lots of people can put locations in a pin on a map on a rat run but not reveal that it's a whole route or area that is the problem. It is hard to respond to a map with tens of thousands of pins on it.

CONS5:[CHAT] Commonplace works well for issues represented as points, less so for areas (polygons) or streets (networks/relationships). This is a particular issue for its use in transport engagement.

Commonplace: Agree and accepts there is an issue. Has worked with Sustrans to outline a route on a map and gathered all comments. Commonplace is designing a feedback tool to better handle this kind of issue. The advantage of digital is that it yields a lot of data even if it is hard to read at the front end. You can look at the postcodes or use geofencing to see where the respondents come from. LAs can slice and dice the data. We encourage LAs to play the findings back to respondents with infographics for example.

CONS5:[CHAT] Great thanks for the answer! Yes some people struggle to read maps and put pins in wrong places.

CONS5:[CHAT] Google are talking about us being in era of "peak map" and that heads-up (Streetview type view) will be more common in future. Maybe a way to see the street online where you want to add a pin will help.



CC2: Found it hard to analyse heat map data sometimes.

ACAD1:[CHAT] Commonplace have developed some excellent methods and locally to us, Gascoyne are leaders in this area.

ACAD1:[CHAT] Great to hear more about Commonplace's work. Interesting point about reducing 'gaming' in responses. Interesting to hear about the pins issue too.

NGO1:[CHAT] The challenge for Commonplace and the other comparable suppliers is converting the raw data into meaningful output and advice to inform decision makers. Remember the fourth of the Gunning Principles<sup>6</sup> of 'Conscientious consideration' !

CONS6:[CHAT] One thing I like about Commonplace's approach is that it's easier to include visitors, who are key to many rural economies and environments, for good and for harm, but who can be missed in live engagement.

NGO1:[CHAT] Watch for the (newly defined) 'seldom online'. People who have internet but reluctant to use it for responding to anything like this ...

ACAD1:[CHAT] Given that often face to face consultation has the issue that it attracts far more older than younger people, virtual methods may also balance up that asymmetry?

CONS6:[CHAT] A positive about digital engagement is that it avoids interviewer bias.

ACAD1:[CHAT] Except bias may creep in, in way questions framed I guess...

## 6.2 Challenges in the transport sector

### *Approaching the 'never not a car driver'*

DEV:[CHAT] We are trying to achieve modal shift, and that requires people to engage who don't think they need to - they are quite happy with their cars. How do we do that?

CONS6:[CHAT] Start with WHY you're trying to achieve modal shift. It's not an end in itself. They may want the same end results and may be willing to engage in ways that can be reached, including car use, but perhaps also involving other things.

CONS7:[CHAT] I think you need to go where they go, including to the carparks, the work places. And be flexible in your message targeting to show you understand their issues and priorities

CC1:[CHAT] The argument also holds for transport choices - people are happy to support better air quality etc but as long as it allows them to continue their existing travel modes. Most calls to save rural bus services are from people who want it there for when their car is being repaired.

CHAIR[CHAT] CC1, I have a sense that a lot of people - even those with cars - have valued the peace and clean air during lockdown and that may result in different attitudes. Liz Gillard's point on people sharing objectives is relevant here.

MOB:[CHAT] Great point, cars are sometimes the only option right now - we need to look at how we use cars more intelligently. It does feel like intelligent car use is off the table in favour of more active travel. People need to understand there are alternatives to private car ownership.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The%20Gunning%20Principles.pdf>

### *Service delivery consultations and finding unmet need*

CHAIR: Asked for responses to questions in CHAT about service delivery (ie patterns of service and new mobility) which is harder to consult on than new infrastructure schemes. In the DRT Roundtable a CC representative said that unmet transport needs are an important issue.

CONS3: We have used Commonplace for service delivery consultations for example with clinical commissioning groups to get feedback on maternity services. We are very interested in moving away from pieces of one-off work a single transport project or housing development, towards bigger holistic conversations on a range of things. We already invite people to opt in to receive notifications about any new consultations in their local area they would like to know about.

Also would like to build up an understanding of people's needs and get a richer picture over time as the conversation or dialogue develops, so that major projects and organisations can draw on this for the future.

CONS5:[CHAT] If we are going to join up conversations, having more consistent/interoperable data standards between engagement platforms will be important. But there will be GDPR issues if comments are stored and reused by future engagement years down the line.

CONS4:[CHAT] Adding to Chair's point: how to engage communities to understand how access and transport could work for their community and what the delivery models might look like and how the economic model stacks up. The opportunity for expectation shortfall is huge, so even lifting the lid is tricky.

CONS4:[CHAT] I like "AsSetS" - a tool to understand demand, fold in with local engagement, (but) then use this to identify new scheduled, DR & shared transport services - but then have mechanisms to deliver these = make the Bus Services Act work for normal rural areas.

ACAD2:[CHAT] Service delivery and patterns have traditionally been silo'd. It comes back again to collaboration. Work with the stakeholders and community groups and those who are isolated, for example are found. In the research I did last year, young people were just one group identified who were unable to get to college or work through the process.

CC2:[CHAT] With regard to DRT in our county we have a number of DRT services, and we have allowed some members of the community to gain access to services, as they were not able to access the local bus services. They are particularly good, in the rural areas.

TECH: Journey planners are a powerful digital tool which many people are familiar with. They can be used to explore scenarios and compare different service solutions. Allowing people to see how scenarios will affect their personal journeys is much more impactful and less abstract than asking feedback from people on a service timetable. But if there are no services or no prospect of services and if people have no experience of using journey planning applications then you could adapt car route planners (satnavs) which are widely used. It might be possible to use car navigation route planners to show active travel and options for public transport modes?

ACAD2: [CHAT] Digital journey planners don't work in my area...you need mobile phone signal!

ACAD2: We look at services, infrastructure and passengers in silos. We need to use co-design to bring these all together. If you bring everyone into one room you can make things happen. For example, people simply don't know that volunteer services (eg RVS) exist to transport people to hospital. We also need to keep it simple. [REF to future research from her PhD due out in 2020]

ACAD2: In rural Scotland there are no bus services. All we have are trunk roads with lorries and cars and poor or no mobile network. This is the real world.

CONS4:[CHAT] Digital journey planners where there are no services = ride sharing - but public transport is what is needed (and wanted)

ACAD2: Community transport in rural areas exists and is good and could be used more but there are legislative barriers.

CONS7: We need to start by looking at the needs where people are currently at. Engagement methodology is secondary.

### 6.3 Challenges of rural engagement

#### *A world apart*

CONS4:[CHAT] Engagement with Cumbria's rural communities is about trying to find new service models to create basic transport services that would be delivered through new local social enterprise. It is a million miles from property development and largely independent of public sector due to their lack of capacity (not their will). The nature and purpose of engagement is therefore very different to what I am hearing today.

CONS6:[CHAT] Good question!

CONS1:[CHAT] Agree with CONS4. Community engagement is also contextual.

CONS4:[CHAT] Deeper rural transport is all about 3rd sector which is stretched - and often the really innovative minds are focussed more on community pubs, shops, renewables etc. Access and transport often is lost and the shire transport authorities have will but no capacity. The opportunity, then, would be the development of new ways to nurture innovation (and engagement) and service models for these contexts.

CONS4:[CHAT] Locking in the lockdown calm here means TROs for speed limits and access restriction - infrastructure is mainly irrelevant. The cost is therefore officer time. Back to engagement - communities here would love to keep the lanes (not streets) and villages (not "high streets") calm. Public engagement isn't the barrier.

#### *Complex field of stakeholders*

ACAD2:[CHAT] In work I'm doing at the moment in a rural area for reopening the tourism sector, we have identified 70 'partners' including social media outlets. This is a very hard process. Last year I undertook co-design research in my rural area using known methods but in an innovative manner. It can be done, but agree with comments above. Hopefully the work will be published towards the end of the year.

NGO1:[CHAT] To ACAD2 I'd be keen to see it - and the Institute is happy to publish best practice.

ACAD2:[CHAT] Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community project (SRITC) hosts Virtual Cafes. Details on the community and videos of the cafés here.<sup>7</sup>

CONS1:[CHAT] I can only support these cafés. They are great, and a good example of how to engage collaboratively with a variety of stakeholders.

#### *Overlooked and excluded groups*

CHAIR: CHAT points on the digital divide.

70% of respondents are under 35 which is a bias. There is also a class issue and people with cars don't care about people without cars.

CONS3: We know that nationally 92% of people are online so 8% are immediately excluded from digital tools. And within the 92% many aren't confident in using online tools. So yes there is an exclusionary bias. Digital is not the whole solution and we need to join face to face engagement with digital methods, via community groups and directly to collect data. You can use an iPad with people in a face to face conversations to enter their responses into the same database.

---

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2jUL-spTAZsrR57v1\\_lq7w?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2jUL-spTAZsrR57v1_lq7w?view_as=subscriber) and <https://ruralmobility.scot>

CONS3: We know that Commonplace doesn't do well with diversity of background (class) and we are working hard on this at the moment. We recognise the need to do a lot better. It is a big and interesting challenge ahead to improve.

CONS2:[CHAT] Rural areas often deeply divided between car owners and non car owners - hidden class issues.

PRO:[CHAT] Agree with CONS2. Clear [hidden class issues] in work done in Lincs. and Dorset.

CONS2:[CHAT] What about involving children - often a way to overcome divisions.

CONS6:[CHAT] People 'happy with cars' excludes the views of people who don't have primary access to the car in a one car household. Engage teenagers.

#### *Managing expectations*

CONS4: Admits to his own failures to engage well in the past. Recognises there are lots of problems from urban and suburban context and just doesn't recognise this in deep rural setting. In Cumbria in settlements of 1000 to 2000 people and in hamlets on key corridors 10 miles from the nearest town, with no transport services, here there are no scheduled public transport services to consult on!

So we need delicate work with communities where it is risky to raise expectations, when at the moment (and for the past ten years) there has been no mechanism for transport services. These communities know their problems and their desires in relation to transport but there were no mechanisms to address them. So we are asking community bodies to deliver.

There is a major risk of expectation shortfall. This is not the fault of the Transport Authorities. We need new economic models for basic access to services. So engagement is all secondary really. We have a delivery problem fundamentally. Consultation and engagement on infrastructure is irrelevant in rural settings as the problems are all about accessibility and finding new ways of delivering services.

You need a delicate touch with consultation and engagement in this context.

CONS2: I agree with this point. If the options are very limited then you have to go in with solutions you know that you can deliver and ask people to identify priorities and trade-offs. In rural areas you need to poll people who could help with delivery like the private hire sector, which may have spare capacity. The priority is community cohesion. Parish councils are very good and often under-use their powers. They are a good intermediary to use with DCs and CCs. Can't ignore members - need to use them more.

CONS6:[CHAT] SRA did some work joining the 'sharing economy' to transport in 'deep rural' as defined by CONS4.

CONS2:[CHAT] CONS4 - I love your use of the word 'delicately'

ACAD2:[CHAT] Agree with CONS4. It's the frustration that communities then feel at that stage

NGO1:[CHAT] I also agree

CC2:[CHAT] I agree with CONS4. There is also a cost issue to providing the services that people need/require.

## 6.4 Local Authority constraints and opportunities

### *Funding*

CHAIR: We need cash in rural transport. Cash should be spent in ways that respond to people and not top down. Even small amounts of funding in deep rural places can make a very big difference. It's possible to build trust if you can meet and then raise expectations.

CONS2:[CHAT] Thinking outside the box sometimes works e.g. getting long distance coaches to stop near isolated villages as in Lincolnshire.

CONS6:[CHAT]Glad that CONS1 has made the Local Authority resources point.

CC3: In our county we have major challenges with an infrastructure review with a need for wide public engagement. Yet we have resource limits. I would love to be able to give everyone the space and time to be heard and to talk to them in language they understand and do a good job. We need to use engagement as an opportunity to change the public's behaviour.

CONS1:[CHAT] The resources issue partly comes back to training. If consultation and engagement is a legally required part of what we do as professionals, why is there not training provided as part of degree courses, or an essential part of CPD?

NGO1:[CHAT] It's very tempting to refer you to the Consultation Institute's large e-learning programme on all aspects of the subject - and our CPD ... !

#### *Timing*

CC1:[CHAT] Another current challenge is the time needed as against the delivery time for funding certainty - recent example is DfT bid (given a week to get bid in) delivery required within 8 weeks - no time for consultation if we want the funding.

NDPB: Timing is important. If consulting or engaging we invite outsiders to join a dialogue that has been going on for a long time inside the organisation, it is a problem if the involvement is too late. The scope and objectives have already been decided. Timing is related to clarity of purpose. If you consult earlier people have more opportunity to influence the project.

#### *Councillors overruling public*

CONS2:[CHAT] Is there no sympathy for the Edmund Burke view - come on you traffic engineers!

CONS2:[CHAT] What about when elected members override public engagement views?

CC1:[CHAT] We will need to go through a proper consultation process (whatever that means now :) in order to make things permanent. [Reference to Covid-19 street changes without consultation]

CONS6:[CHAT]That goes back to the point about the degree of decision making elected members - and officers - are prepared to yield

ACAD1:[CHAT] I think we should be careful to avoid the notion that in responding to engagement we need to reflect a balance in what then do between pro and anti perspectives when actually the scale of the desire and the evidence-based need to change to more resilient, healthy and safe streets not over weighted towards driving is being made abundantly clear across the country.

CC1:[CHAT] ACAD1 I understand your point but the actual decision makers are our elected representatives and quite naturally they respond to the "noise".

#### *Parish and town councils*

CONS2:[CHAT] What about the role of Parish Councils?

NGO1:[CHAT] CONS2 is right about Parish Council. Remember some town councils are large.

CHAIR[CHAT] TPS has done a guide on transport for parish/town councils with National Association of Local Councils<sup>8</sup>.

CONS2:[CHAT] Good work with Parish Councils in West Haddon and Crick - the former chose traffic calming and the latter a bypass - the PC fronted the engagement processes including village referenda with our help.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://tps.org.uk/news/the-good-councillors-guide>

CC2:[CHAT] I think also we could do more around promoting new services and working with Parish Councils would be key to this.

## 6.5 Covid-19 Case Study

### *The experiment*

CC1: We took a "benign dictatorship" approach to introduce changes on the basis of public health for Covid-19 social distancing. We were disappointed with the PM's announcements of reducing the distancing requirement from 2m to 1m, as we had wanted some stability over the summer until September, to get a proper view on the response to the measures. This is an experiment that needed to be in place for some time before people perceived the benefits. We have had a very mixed response to the changes:

a one way system; pedestrian and cycle penetration in high streets; removed parking and loading bays in high streets. Responses ranged from vitriol over changes to car parking to praise with people feeling much safer as a result of the changes. it is "Judgement of Solomon time"! Very hard.

CC1: Working with behavioural scientists team on research to understand how people reacted to the changes. Public health is a universal message that makes people think about their behaviour rather than congestion or travel time. These changes would not have been possible without Covid-19.

CC1:[CHAT] Great opportunity to trial temporary solutions in a way that gets people to experience them before they respond - too many perceptions get in the way of change.

CC4: Our county is in a similar situation. We have used Commonplace to keep the public informed on 14 schemes with district councils in partnership. Also have been advising DCs on other schemes. We have had mixed responses. Agree that we wanted the temporary measures to remain until the tranche 2 emergency response funding came through. This is a crucial time and if we end lockdown it sets all the gains back.

### *Discussion*

CC1:[CHAT] big challenge when dealing with strategic ideas - generally easier to get buy in - as against the local interpretation of that which affects individuals lives.

DEV:[CHAT] Agreed with CC1 - everyone knows we need more housing, they just want it to happen elsewhere!

CC1:[CHAT] Costly but do we think that consultation processes should more regularly involve temporary works so that people can experience the solution and comment?

NGO1:[CHAT] Yes

NGO2:[CHAT] CC1 - yes. To add to the three models of transport planning... experiment. Try something out and see if it works for people. Revealed preference is more compelling than stated preference in consultation/engagement

NGO2:[CHAT] Of course, experimentation is hard with hard infrastructure!

ACAD1:[CHAT] Well done CONS1 for trying things out - really hope can embed these. Saying mixed responses but so did Waltham forest when Mini Hollands started. Go with evidence that mode shift is necessary for urban resilience reasons...

CONS2:[CHAT] Agree finding the 'sweet topic' such as currently public health is very helpful.

PRO:[CHAT] CC1's comments highlights the importance of getting people to understand and accept the need to change their behaviour - this is going to be a long term process which will need consistent reinforcement from many directions.

NGO1:[CHAT] The NHS has also made temporary changes which they might like to make permanent. But the law requires them to consult. With temporary transport changes, Councils who try to by-pass consultation will, I fear store up trouble - or end up in Court.

REGG: This has been very helpful suggesting new tools to try in consultation in our region. Like the point that consulting on long term strategy is hard to get engagement from people on things that are not day to day or very local. Very hard to consult about issues affecting the whole region. Need to consult on issues that are important to local settings and people's lived experience.

CONS1:[CHAT] Do it (engagement and action), and detect it. Making it accessible helps too!

CONS4:[CHAT] Steve Jobs' quote (something like...) there is no demand for something that people don't recognise and can't understand - but might then be very popular (like a smart phone!) = modern 21st century rural access and mobility. Engagement then gets \*really\* interesting - and living labs become like Christmas.

CONS6:[CHAT] Love that from CONS4.

CONS5:[CHAT] Great point, CONS4!

GOV:[CHAT] Part of DfT's follow-up to the [decarbonisation] plan includes "Living Labs" - we are working with the EPSRC and ESRC on this. ESRC very interested in this social challenge.

## 6.6 Levers for large scale behaviour change

### *Changing professional methodology*

PRO: Within all of the professional transport bodies there is lots of demand for change in the current methodology of transport appraisal and assessment. This is critical to create places that look different to those found by Transport for New Homes in the recent Garden Communities<sup>9</sup> report. This is a fundamental and urgent issue. If we had engaged better in the past maybe we would not have had such poor developments.

PRO:[CHAT] Very many people agree with Nathan's views and paper but getting change is proving incredibly difficult. LOTAG, TPS, CIHT, RTPI have recently formally written to DfT seeking a fundamental change in current methodologies. It has been said many times before but will DfT change? What do we need to do to get them to change?

CONS4:[CHAT] Isn't the absence of affordable transport services in many rural areas at least partly a result of standard transport planning? And therefore do their engagement models even apply? I am making these points from a positive and constructive point of view by the way - in that what can we learn that fits where deeper rural areas are at the moment.

PRO:[CHAT] It is important that we do not "reinvent" the wheel! Having been around too long many of the issues and solution have previously been the subject of a lot of work and action. There is now a lot can be gained from new technology but the principles and problems are the same. Let's build on past practice and develop it rather than ignore it. Maybe it because of lack of training in this area or resources or interest. Much practical guidance already exists.

ACAD1:[CHAT] I made this point last time but we need more training for transport engineers on engagement - and maybe universities like ours can contribute through CPD courses?

CONS6:[CHAT] CPD is important, because we learn continually as a profession so need to spread that learning to individuals.

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/the-project/garden-villages-and-garden-towns/>

GOV: Current ministers at DfT are very user focussed and interested in people's real needs. There is always criticism of appraisal guidance. Following consultation in 2019 two messages that emerged were appraisal guidance should be applied flexibly and we need people-centred business cases. DfT has an aspiration to work on getting several cost/benefit ratio measures to supplement the traditional appraisal outputs. Central government is starting new deliberative research on ideas with representative public to capitalise on benefits of Covid-19. There is lots of behavioural science underway at DfT which will play a big role in understanding how to work with people. Very grateful for the roundtable which is useful and has added new information for DfT.

### *Building consent for action*

CHAIR: What about engaging elected members who so often over-rule the demands of the public?

NGO2: UK100 has launched a new climate network<sup>10</sup> for local authorities in rural areas. This is all about political engagement at local and national level and all levels in between. Very interested in questions about political consent building for action. Agree that we need to go back to basics to understand people's motivations before consulting on solutions. We need to take a long term view, not necessarily engage on a scheme or services but engage for engagement's sake so councillors and local authorities truly understand the depth of people's feelings. I liked the sentiment from a CC participant that they would love to have time to talk to everyone in depth. This dialogue gives councillors more confidence in decision making and helps them respond to critical responses (for example over parking restraint). The aim is to build this political consent across communities.

NGO1:[CHAT] This is an important point. Many of the emerging engagement techniques are great at understanding aspirations, needs and priorities. If done well, legally-enforceable consultations are different.

NGO1:We need to distinguish between engagement centred on aspirations, needs and priorities of which many bottom up organisational tools are very good, some are formal and rigid. If conversations are done well they are useful, if done badly they queer the whole pitch.

NGO1:The Aarhus Convention<sup>11</sup> underpins the planning laws with an obligation to consult over changes to the environment [REF] The same core principles should apply in consulting communities over transport schemes: tell the truth, give people time to think, don't make up your mind in advance.

NGO1:Agree there is a big dilemma if LAs consult but have no resources to deliver.

CC1:[CHAT] Agree with NGO2 - my cynical hat says that people are more likely to engage if they oppose something than if they support it - how do we get the balance?

CONS1:[CHAT] Something to raise is that many people are action focussed. And that is important in how you frame the engagement. A strong objection is that people dedicate their time and effort, and then nothing is heard or delivered. If it's exploratory and you want to understand the issues, make that clear with them. Then they can choose not to engage if they so wish.

CONS4:[CHAT] I wholeheartedly agree James ... and so engagement needs the ability to deliver.

NGO2:[CHAT] Thanks NGO1, CC1, CONS1 - good points

CONS6:[CHAT] NGO1 is hitting one of my concerns: our enthusiasm for means of engagement rather overlooks that many authorities engage because they're obliged to, not because they want their decisions to be changed.

CONS1:[CHAT] Remember, NOT engaging is just as valid a choice as engaging

NGO1:[CHAT] There is probably too much consultation!!! (heresy?) Do it when there are proposals and trade-offs to consider.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uk100.org/launching-uk100s-countryside-climate-network/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/>



CC2:[CHAT] In our county, we are actively encouraged to carry out digital engagement, it is getting them to take part. There are so many consultations do people get fed up with responding.

CONS5:[CHAT] Interesting to consider Aarhus Convention principles in context of Experimental Traffic Orders, where public consultation (or rather scope for objections) tends to happen only after making. More broadly how to consult and engage on "living labs" rather than usual model of discuss for long time before doing.

#### *Whether to consult or not*

NGO1:[CHAT] Unlike other sectors, large-scale transport investments are so long-term, it's hard to consult early enough. But that does not apply to more local initiatives ... .. and those, [CC1] DO need engagement and consultation ...

CC1:[CHAT] Much of what we need to do at the moment is not large scale in cost terms but requires significant change in behaviours to deliver the benefits.

ACAD1:[CHAT] The idea of not consulting and why it might be redundant is explored in the current engagement literature. Some academics have said we are now in post consultation times because structural issues/power relations are not amenable to change via engagement.

#### *Cognitive behavioural approach*

CC3: Re "limbic engagement" nature of digital platforms. People aren't interested in transport unless it affects them in the moment where they are. So very interested in behavioural research.

CC3: Is Covid-19 the limbic trigger we need to engage people in transport issues for example, now that people have experienced cleaner air. We can now flag up the dangers of the obesity epidemic and the importance of health as a channel to get people interested in active travel. The threat of coronavirus might be the deep trigger in the brain needed to generate the emotional response to motivate behaviour change. Without that degree of motivation really we are just dancing on the head of a pin.

PRO: Fundamentally, engagement is a behavioural issue. CIHT is working with the RCA to inspire and persuade individuals to change their attitudes and behaviours, with a set of prototype toolkits based on semi-rural and rural communities. We are working with people's current values and using different ways to consider changing transport behaviour, looking at obesity, climate change and other issues. We are working with individual communities composed of all ages and backgrounds.

CC1:[CHAT] My personal view is that we need to engage far more with the behavioural science experts to help with the significant changes in travel patterns that we need - it is not all about infrastructure.

CC1:[CHAT] Anecdotally, public health and air quality appear to be the best way to get people to consider transport solutions that require a change in their behaviour.

CONS6:[CHAT] CC1 is spot on. By starting with the underlying objectives, we can get people to think about what they do, not only ask them to replicate their current patterns with a different mode

CONS Kris Beuret :[CHAT] Agree with CC1 "Plan to Provide" then engage.

#### *Celebrity Endorsement*

PRO:[CHAT] We need an equivalent to David Attenborough on plastics in oceans - so people really do understand all the interconnections between their behaviour and wider issues of society.

TECH:[CHAT] Absolutely agree -- the earlier the better.

#### *6.7 Other*

CC2:[CHAT] I am standing in for another colleague and reporting information back. I am not aware of too much of common place.

CONS2:[CHAT] Should we discourage people from moving to rural areas on retirement? What about the concept of key villages in rural area as hubs?

CONS6:[CHAT] Can we discuss motivation? Not public motivation, decision maker motivation.

NGO1:[CHAT] I deny any responsibility for the Welsh village, but did I hear mention of the word 'majority'? Now that's a challenging concept in this context ... [people turning on an outsider]

CONS1: Inaudible

## 7.0 References and other resources

CIHT (2015) Involving the public and other stakeholders

[https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/4464/involving\\_the\\_public\\_and\\_othe\\_stakeholders\\_-\\_june\\_2015\\_11049.pdf](https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/4464/involving_the_public_and_othe_stakeholders_-_june_2015_11049.pdf)

Gates, S. et al (2019) Transport and inequality: An evidence review for the Department for Transport (2019)

Nat Cen

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/843487/Transport\\_and\\_inequality\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843487/Transport_and_inequality_report.pdf)

Jones, R. & Gammell, E. (2018), The Politics of Consultation, The Consultation Institute

NALC (2019) The good councillor's guide to transport planning

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/3070-the-good-councillor-s-guide-to-transport-planning-1/file>

Social Research Associates (2004), Public Transport Needs of Minority Ethnic and Faith Communities Guidance Pack (accessed 16/7/2020)

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20091203133425/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/mef/publictransportneedsofminority3259>

[www.consultationinstitute.org](http://www.consultationinstitute.org)

Rural transport and innovation on Orkney from Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community project and

videos of community cafés <https://ruralmobility.scot> and [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2jUL-spTAZsrR57v1\\_lq7w?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2jUL-spTAZsrR57v1_lq7w?view_as=subscriber)

POLIS webinar "Serving the underserved, the impacts of COVID on vulnerable people in remote (sub) urban and rural areas"

[http://www.h2020-inclusion.eu/news-and-events/news/detail-news/news/post-lockdown-mobility-webinar-report-serving-the-underserved/?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=453cfdee6dfe897a7c72a2c86b87505](http://www.h2020-inclusion.eu/news-and-events/news/detail-news/news/post-lockdown-mobility-webinar-report-serving-the-underserved/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=453cfdee6dfe897a7c72a2c86b87505)