



House of Commons
Transport Committee

Draft revised National Policy Statement for National Networks

Ninth Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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Transport Committee

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Jonathan Arkless (Committee Specialist), Millie Bacon (Inquiry Manager), Judith Boyce (Clerk), Daniel Gillett (Committee Specialist), Alexandra Hunter-Wainwright (Committee Operations Manager), Olivia McComb (Assistant Clerk), Olivia Rose (Media Officer), Abi Samuels (Second Clerk), Owen Sheppard (Senior Media Officer), and Mandy Sullivan (Committee Operations Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Transport Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2226; the Committee's email address is transcom@parliament.uk.

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Summary

In March 2023 the Government published a draft revised National Policy Statement for National Networks (NNNPS), its statement of strategic planning policy for nationally significant road and rail schemes. The Government's reasons for the review are the need to account for policy commitments on net zero made since the designation of the existing NNNPS in 2015 and the need to ensure that networks meet current and future demand. By incorporating these into the new statement, the Government expects to reduce delays in obtaining development consent caused by legal challenges to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

The review process

The draft revised NNNPS was published more than eight years after the current version. The Government should have been proactive and reviewed the NNNPS upon the introduction of net zero targets rather than in response to legal challenges. The Government should introduce five-year review periods for the NNNPS, with a shorter term where changes in policy decisions or policy drivers warrant it. The Government could also consider the modular approach suggested by the National Infrastructure Commission.

Legal challenges to schemes on climate grounds

The draft revised NNNPS attempts to balance the Government's 2050 net zero targets with an infrastructure regime which could potentially increase greenhouse gas emissions. The guidance the document provides on assessing, mitigating and approving the greenhouse gas emissions of schemes could be stronger to align with the pathway to net zero.

The Government should respond to the Climate Change Committee's recommendation on reviewing the roads programme and the draft revised NNNPS; clarity on this issue is important for establishing whether challenges to NSIPs on climate grounds are likely to continue. The document should be amended to provide a definition of "residual" greenhouse gas emissions, and to explicitly state the Government's understanding of the legal precedent for permitting major infrastructure schemes which result in an increase in emissions.

Confidence and transparency

There is concern that the Statement of Need which underpins the draft revised NNNPS does not consider a wide enough range of traffic demand scenarios and that congestion forecasts cannot be thoroughly scrutinised. There is also a lack of faith in the options appraisal process for major schemes and concern that the major infrastructure regime perpetuates a "predict and provide" approach to planning. Greater transparency is needed to promote confidence in the robustness of the regime.

The Department for Transport should publish the National Transport Model so that it can be independently tested and verified, or report on a wider range of future

demand scenarios and publish its own estimated congestion forecasts for the Strategic Road Network. The Department must also be more transparent when considering the potential alternatives to schemes. The Department should also provide examples of how the draft revised NNNPS supports a move away from a 'predict and provide' approach.

Further recommendations

We received several recommendations for amendments to the text of the draft revised NNNPS that would make it more likely to function effectively. These included measures on: promoting biodiversity; delivering associated development; provision for people using and crossing the SRN who are not in motorised vehicles; and the application of the NNNPS to smaller schemes currently consented through the Transport and Works Act.

Restructuring the National Policy Statements for transport

Currently there are separate National Policy Statements for National Networks, Ports and Airports. The Government should consider the merits of restructuring future iterations of the National Policy Statements for transport so that there is an over-arching Transport NPS, with Road, Rail, Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, Ports, and Airport NPSs sitting underneath it.

1 Introduction

1. National Policy Statements were created under the Planning Act 2008¹ to “provide guidance for decision-makers on the application of government policy when determining development consent for major infrastructure”.² The thresholds for transport projects considered to be “nationally significant” are set out in sections 15 to 30 of the Act. Projects which meet this threshold are known as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). National Policy Statements are aimed at reducing delays in the planning system for major projects by providing clarity about the main issues to be taken into account when applications are decided.

2. The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NNNPS) is the Government’s statement of strategic planning policy for nationally significant road and rail schemes.³ It provides guidance to applicants in preparing, and the Secretary of State in determining, applications for Development Consent Orders in relation to the National Networks. The existing NNNPS was laid before Parliament in December 2014 and designated in January 2015.

3. Department for Transport guidance defines NSIPs in the transport sector which are considered to be part of the national networks:⁴

- new roads which are to form part of the strategic road network (motorways and trunk roads) operated by Highways England [now National Highways].
- new railway lines in England which are to be operated by Network Rail.
- new rail freight interchanges over 60 hectares in area in England.

Review of the NNNPS and our inquiry

4. In July 2021 the Department for Transport announced that the NNNPS would be reviewed.⁵ On 14 March 2023 the Department for Transport laid before Parliament⁶ a draft revised NNNPS⁷ alongside a Habitats Regulation Assessment⁸ and an Appraisal of Sustainability.⁹

5. Under the Planning Act 2008, designation of a new or revised National Policy Statement requires a period for consideration of the proposal to be set out when it is laid before Parliament. This period, which ends on 20 October 2023 for the draft revised NNNPS, encompasses both a public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny. The task of scrutinising the draft revised NNNPS was allocated to us by the House of Commons Liaison Committee. We announced our inquiry on 24 March 2023. We received 27

1 Planning Act 2008, [Part 2](#)

2 Department for Transport, [Draft national networks national policy statement consultation document](#), March 2023

3 Department for Transport, [National Policy Statement for National Networks](#), December 2014

4 Department for Transport, [Nationally significant infrastructure projects in the transport sector](#), April 2020

5 Department for Transport, [Review of National policy statement for national networks](#), July 2021

6 HC Deb, [col 37WS](#) [Commons written ministerial statement]

7 Department for Transport, [Draft Revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

8 Department for Transport, [National Networks National Policy Statement Habitats Regulation Assessment Version 1.0](#), January 2023

9 Department for Transport, [National Networks National Policy Statement, Appraisal of Sustainability Non-Technical Summary](#), January 2023

submissions of written evidence and held two oral evidence sessions, in June and July 2023, at which we heard from campaigners, legal and planning experts and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Roads, Richard Holden MP. We are grateful to all those who contributed to our work, and to our Specialist Adviser, Martin Clarke, for his assistance throughout the inquiry.¹⁰

Rationale for the review

6. The main reasons given by the Government for reviewing the 2015 NNNPS are the need to account for subsequent policy commitments on net zero and the need to ensure that networks meet current and future demand. By incorporating these into the new statement, the Government expects to reduce delays in obtaining development consent caused by legal challenges to NSIP schemes.

7. The Department for Transport told us that the NNNPS review was a key element of its Action Plan¹¹ for NSIPs, which was published in February 2023 in response to the delays to obtaining development consent to programmes in the Road Investment Strategy 2 portfolio.¹² The Department explained that the Action Plan “sets out reforms that will be implemented to ensure the planning system supports our infrastructure needs”.¹³

Net zero

8. Since the NNNPS was designated in 2015 the Government has committed to decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy and amended the Climate Change 2008 Act in 2019 to introduce a net zero target for the UK economy by 2050.¹⁴ This was a major change to the policy environment in which the NNNPS operates. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan outlines how transport will contribute to reaching the 2050 net zero target.¹⁵ The Department for Transport told us:

[The draft revised NNNPS] provides a clearer framework for assessing the carbon impact of NSIP schemes [...] within the context of the government’s binding carbon targets and net zero. The NNNPS sets out the principles based on which individual projects should be assessed, including the environmental impacts of a proposed scheme.¹⁶

Meeting network demand

9. The Department for Transport told us that the national networks make a “vital contribution” to economic growth, and that there needs to be “an ambitious programme

10 Martin Clarke declared the following interests: employed by Skanska to advise on a DCO application on the A46 Newark Bypass and to advise on negotiations with National Highways regarding appointment to a contract for the Lower Thames Crossing North Kent Roads; appointed by East West Rail as Chair of an Independent Expert Panel to assist with project development.

11 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects \(NSIP\) reforms: action plan](#), February 2023

12 [NPS0025](#)

13 [NPS0025](#)

14 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener](#), April 2022

15 Department for Transport, [Decarbonising Transport](#), 2021

16 Department for Transport ([NPS0025](#))

of investment in our networks”.¹⁷ Chapter 3 of the draft revised NNNPS sets out the Department for Transport’s case for the development of the national networks—the Statement of Need. The Statement of Need says that “there are a range of challenges which national networks face, and which may lead to the need to develop national networks further through infrastructure interventions”.¹⁸

10. The draft revised NNNPS says that the national road network “is already under significant pressure” and that traffic congestion imposes “significant economic costs” (estimated at £1.9 billion in 2010). This pressure is “set to increase” due to population increases, economic growth and a fall in the cost of car travel. It concludes that there is a “compelling need for the development of the national road network”.¹⁹

11. For the national rail network, the Statement of Need identified demand pressures and the environment as its two key drivers of need. The draft revised NNNPS says that “passenger demand is predicted to continue to grow significantly and “there is a continued need for capacity and performance improvements on parts of the network”.²⁰

12. The NNNPS also applies to Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs), which enable freight to be transferred between transport modes. The Statement of Need states that SRFIs “optimise the use of rail in the freight journey by maximising rail trunk haul and minimising some elements of the secondary distribution leg by road”. It identifies the changing needs of the logistics sector, rail freight growth, the environment, and the economy as the drivers of need, and concludes that there is “a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs”.²¹

Obtaining development consent

13. The NNNPS has been reviewed against a backdrop of legal challenges to NSIP projects which were included in the second Road Investment Strategy 2 portfolio. Along with other factors, such as inflationary pressures, these challenges have delayed and disrupted the delivery of the portfolio, which we examined in our July 2023 report on strategic road investment.²² There were an initial 33 NSIPs in the Road Investment Strategy 2 portfolio which required approval from the Secretary of State through a Development Consent Order. The National Audit Office reported that by May 2022, National Highways had experienced delays in receiving or applying for development consent on numerous projects, and said that additional work was required to show how road projects complied with evolving government policy relating to the environment.²³

17 Department for Transport ([NPS0025](#))

18 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

19 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

20 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

21 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

22 Transport Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2022–23, [Strategic road investment](#), HC 904, para 62

23 National Audit Office, [Road enhancements: progress with the second road investment strategy, \(2020 to 2025\)](#), November 2022

2 The review process

14. The review of the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NNNPS) was announced in July 2021, with a draft revised document published in March 2023. The announcement came more than six years after the designation of the existing NNNPS, and in the end there were eight years between the designation of the original and the publication of the draft revised version.

Review timescales

15. The National Infrastructure Planning Association²⁴ and Transport Action Network²⁵ told us that the NNNPS should be reviewed once every five years. This would be in line with a recommendation made by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) in April 2023 to make five-yearly reviews of the NNNPS a legal requirement.²⁶

16. We asked Richard Holden, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport, if he thought that it would be beneficial for the NNNPS to be reviewed every five years. He said that “the key thing is that when major Government policy changes that is when we need to review the NNNPS”.²⁷ David Buttery, Roads Strategy Director at the Department for Transport, added that “the actual reviewing of the NPS is quite an undertaking, which means that there is a bit of a disincentive to do it”.²⁸ The NIC has suggested that making the system more flexible would allow the wider policy environment to be reflected in a less burdensome way. In its April 2023 report, the NIC recommended a “modular” approach to updates, where the modules are “attached to legislation” and would not need to be separately consulted on.

17. In some cases, the Department has used the NNNPS review as an opportunity to look ahead and anticipate changes to the policy environment in which the NNNPS operates. These provisions can help to future-proof the way that the NNNPS operates without a wholesale revision and re-designation. For example, the draft revised NNNPS recognises that Environmental Outcome Reports could replace Environmental Impact Assessments from 2025. David Buttery, Roads Strategy Director at the Department for Transport, told us that:

The draft NNNPS before us already acknowledges that we know that environmental outcome reports are coming. It points towards that. We do not believe that change, when it is introduced formally, will require us to come back and do this again.²⁹

18. The review of the NNNPS was overdue. It was launched to bring the policy framework for major infrastructure schemes up to date, and as a response to legal challenges to schemes prompted by the introduction of significant net zero legislation. The Government should have been proactive and reviewed the NNNPS upon the introduction of net zero targets, and should do so when any changes are made to the net zero target policies.

24 National Infrastructure Planning Association ([NPS0024](#))

25 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))

26 National Infrastructure Commission, [Delivering net zero, climate resilience and growth](#), April 2023

27 [Q104](#)

28 [Q104](#)

29 [Q106](#)

19. *The Government should introduce five-year review periods for the NNNPS, with a shorter term where changes in policy decisions or policy drivers warrant it. This does not necessarily mean that wholesale revisions should be made to the NNNPS every five years, but the reviews would provide an opportunity for the Department for Transport to consider the wider policy environment and Government priorities. The Government could also consider the modular approach suggested by the National Infrastructure Commission.*

3 Legal challenges to schemes on climate grounds

20. It was the Department for Transport’s aim to revise the NNNPS in order to support the design of major infrastructure projects in line with net zero targets and thus reduce the scope for legal challenges to schemes. We have heard from both campaigners and planning law experts, however, that the draft revised NNNPS, as it stands, could result in more legal action on net zero grounds.

Greenhouse gas provision in the NNNPS

21. Chapter 5 of the draft revised NNNPS (Generic Impacts) sets out the potential impacts of the major infrastructure under consideration and how these should be measured. The carbon assessment criteria for each stage of an NSIP application (Application, Mitigation and Decision Making) are outlined in paragraphs 5.25–5.37. Crucially, there is also a provision stating that residual carbon emissions as an impact of NSIP schemes are acceptable:

The construction and operation of national network infrastructure will in itself lead to greenhouse gas emissions. [...] while all steps should be taken to reduce and mitigate climate change impacts, there will likely be residual emissions from national networks infrastructure, particularly during the economy wide transition to net zero, and potentially beyond.³⁰

Chapter 5 goes on to emphasise that:

Therefore, approval of schemes with residual carbon emissions is allowable and can be consistent with meeting carbon budgets, net zero and the UK’s Nationally Determined Contribution.³¹

22. We heard that the provision in the draft NNNPS which permits the approval of projects which could result in a net increase in greenhouse gases could perpetuate legal challenges to such schemes.³² The objection to the provision in the draft revised NNNPS on these grounds is rooted in what Keith Buchan, Skills Director at the Transport Planning Society, described as a “tension” between NSIPs (particularly road schemes) and the Government’s net zero targets.³³

23. This was highlighted by the Climate Change Committee’s Progress Report to Parliament in June 2023 which recommended that the Government should conduct a “systematic review of current and future road-building projects” and “permit schemes to be taken forward only if they meaningfully support cost-effective delivery of Net Zero and climate adaptation”.³⁴ These recommendations were made in order to ensure that emissions from surface transport remain on track with the Sixth Carbon Budget, which “provides ministers with advice on the volume of greenhouse gases the UK can emit during

30 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

31 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

32 [Q37](#)

33 [Q54](#)

34 Climate Change Committee, [Progress in reducing emissions: 2023 Report to Parliament](#), June 2023

the period 2033–2037” in order to help meet the 2050 net zero target for the UK economy.³⁵ Phil Goodwin, Emeritus Professor of Transport Policy at University College London, told us that the Climate Change Committee’s recommendation “has to be confronted”, and that the NNNPS could be rendered “irrelevant” should that recommendation be accepted by the Government.³⁶

24. We heard some criticism of the greenhouse gas assessment and mitigation provision in the draft revised NNNPS. Julian Worth, Chair of the Rail Freight Forum at the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, said “our overriding reaction to it, and our disappointment, was that it is not sufficiently radical on decarbonisation”.³⁷ Transport Action Network told us that the measures to assess and mitigate emissions were not consistent with the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan.³⁸ Green Alliance said that the draft revised NNNPS “fails to allow for proper scrutiny of greenhouse gas emissions [and direct and indirect impacts] caused by major road-building projects”.³⁹ Dr David Metz expressed concern that “the modelling of the impact of new road investments will systematically underestimate carbon emissions from the additional (induced) traffic” generated by NSIP projects.⁴⁰

25. Transport Action Network, who have brought legal action against NSIP highways schemes, told us that the NNNPS “adopts a head in the sand attitude to the changed policy and legislative landscape”, and “ignores the strategic priorities of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan”.⁴¹ Transport Action Network argued:

The only credible way forward now is for the NNNPS review to be paused pending an independent review of the roads programme. [...] Failing to recognise the inevitable would mean a flood of new legal challenges and threaten public respect for the planning system, at a time when it needs to be increased if we are to deliver the infrastructure that is essential for net zero, which roads clearly are anything but.⁴²

26. We asked the Minister and his officials how the draft revised NNNPS would help to achieve net zero by 2050, given the concerns outlined above. He said:

We have had a huge push. Obviously, this is a planning document for the next few years rather than all the way through to 2050, but we recognise that broader commitment alongside the transport decarbonisation plan.⁴³

David Buttery, the Department for Transport’s Director for Roads Strategy, added:

The Climate Change Committee’s latest recommendations came out after this consultation draft was published, so clearly we could not have taken them into account 100 per cent. [...] We will reflect on it, certainly. That

35 Climate Change Committee, [Sixth Carbon Budget](#), December 2020

36 [Q18](#)

37 [Q65](#)

38 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))

39 Green Alliance ([NPS0007](#))

40 Dr David Metz (honorary professor at UCL Centre for Transport Studies) ([NPS0001](#))

41 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))

42 Transport Action Network ([NPS0027](#))

43 [Q139](#)

is not to say that we will accept what it has recommended, because, clearly, we need to think about it, but we will definitely reflect on it as part of this process.⁴⁴

27. The draft revised NNNPS attempts to balance the Government’s 2050 net zero targets with an NSIP regime which could potentially increase greenhouse gas emissions. While the document provides guidance on assessing, mitigating, and approving the greenhouse gas emissions of schemes, these measures could be stronger to align with the pathway to net zero.

28. The Government should respond to the Climate Change Committee’s recommendation on reviewing the roads programme and explain why this recommendation will or will not be taken forward. The Climate Change Committee’s recommendations do not relate directly to the NNNPS, but acceptance of them would change the policy environment in which the NNNPS operates and, presumably, prompt further review. Obtaining clarity on this issue is important for establishing whether challenges to NSIPs on climate grounds are likely to continue.

Defining “residual” emissions

29. There is further lack of clarity regarding scheme emissions within the draft revised NNNPS. The draft document explicitly states that “approval of schemes with residual carbon emissions is allowable and can be consistent with meeting carbon budgets, net zero and the UK’s Nationally Determined Contribution”. However, it does not provide any guidance on what “residual” means and contains no mechanism for distinguishing between “residual” emissions (consistent with meeting carbon budgets) and a level of emissions which would not be consistent with meeting those targets.

30. This lack of clarity could lead to further legal challenges to schemes. The National Infrastructure Planning Association told us that this clause, “if retained, in the revised NNNPS once designated, will continue to be subject to challenge in [its] subsequent application to DCO decision making”.⁴⁵ Keith Buchan, Skills Director at the Transport Planning Society, described the provision for residual emissions as “potentially [...] incredibly dangerous” as it allows any distinction between “residual” carbon and an “increase” in carbon to be blurred.⁴⁶

31. The draft NNNPS permits “residual” greenhouse gas emissions from NSIPs, but does not define what “residual” means, nor does it set out a threshold or limits for a level of emissions that would be deemed “residual”. Accordingly, schemes which are likely to cause an increase in carbon emissions may remain vulnerable to legal challenge.

32. The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to provide a definition of, and clear and comprehensive guidance on, “residual” greenhouse gas emissions. This definition must make it possible to distinguish clearly between “residual” and unacceptable increases in emissions from an NSIP.

44 [Q141](#); [Q142](#)

45 National Infrastructure Planning Association ([NPS0024](#))

46 [Q52](#)

Legal precedent for major infrastructure emissions

33. Mustafa Latif-Aramesh, Legal Director at BDB Pitmans, drew our attention to a judgment which followed the High Court’s rejection of a challenge to the granting of planning permission for a runway extension at Southampton airport in April 2022.⁴⁷ The judgment in respect of that scheme said that:

On the basis of current policy and law it is permissible for [the decision-maker] to look at the scale of the Green House Gas emissions relative to a national target and to reach a judgment, which may inevitably be of a generalised nature, about the likelihood of the proposal harming the achievement of that target.⁴⁸

This judgment was clear in stating that a net increase in operational greenhouse gas emissions is not, in itself, a reason to refuse consent. Mr Latif-Aramesh argued that this judgment can be applicable to NSIP schemes and that amending the draft revised NNNPS to explicitly reflect it would help to avoid further legal challenges on these grounds.

34. This was disputed by Transport Action Network, who told us that this argument “fundamentally misunderstands the role of courts in judicial review, which is to assess the legality of a decision based on the facts available at the time”.⁴⁹ Transport Action Network argued that the judgment may have been different had the data underpinning the Transport Decarbonisation Plan been available at the time; that data has since been published by the Department for Transport.

35. ***The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to explicitly state the Government’s understanding of the legal precedent for permitting major infrastructure schemes which result in an increase in emissions, where that increase is judged as not likely to harm the achievement of a national target.***

47 BDB Pitmans ([NPS0014](#))

48 British and Irish Legal Information Institute, [\[2022\] WLR\(D\) 231](#), [\[2022\] EWHC 1221 \(Admin\)](#), [\[2022\] PTSR 1473](#), May 2022

49 Transport Action Network ([NPS0027](#))

4 Confidence and transparency

36. Much of the evidence that we received highlighted a lack of confidence in the Government’s approach to delivering Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) on the National Networks being consistent with its net zero targets. This chapter considers the reasons why there is a lack of confidence in some quarters and what the Department needs to do to demonstrate that the assumptions behind its strategy for decarbonising transport are backed by adequate evidence and analysis.

Evidence base: the National Transport Model

37. The draft revised NNNPS bases its assessment of need for the National Networks on the National Transport Model, which predicts an increase in demand for the Strategic Road Network. We heard the view that the National Transport Model (NTM) does not test a wide enough range of future scenarios and so the Statement of Need, which helps to inform the criteria for scheme assessment and approval, is not sound. Cycling UK argued:

The NTM is seriously flawed in that it fails to model the impact of potential policies that the Government might apply to avert the growth of road traffic (e.g. greater investment in sustainable transport, various road pricing policies or strengthening the role of planning policies in reducing the need to travel). Using the NTM in this way therefore creates a circular argument whereby it is assumed that road traffic will inevitably grow under all possible scenarios, hence transport network capacity must be expanded to accommodate this growth—even though this is inconsistent with achieving net zero.⁵⁰

Keith Buchan, Director for Skills at the Transport Planning Society, told us that “it is widely recognised that there has been progress” in the area of demand forecasting, but “what [the National Transport Model] has not done is produce a wide enough range of scenarios and tested them all.”⁵¹ Phil Goodwin, Emeritus Professor of Transport Policy at University College London, agreed that “there is simply no future modelled to look at zero or minus growth”.⁵² Professor Goodwin also highlighted that the model cannot be independently tested:

It is an incredibly complicated model, and one of its problems is that it is not in the public domain. You cannot, as in the case of the Treasury model, say, “Please can we have the model, and run it and test it, and change the assumptions and see what happens?” You should be able to, I think.⁵³

38. We asked Richard Holden, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport, why the National Transport Model does not consider a wider range of scenarios and inputs. He said that “we have seen significant traffic growth since 2001”.⁵⁴ David Buttery, Roads Strategy Director at the Department for Transport, added:

50 [Cycling UK \(NPS0020\)](#)

51 [Q55](#)

52 [Q20](#)

53 [Q20](#)

54 [Q120](#)

We have looked at eight scenarios, basically. We could have looked at 10 or we could have looked at 12. There is a point where you have to say, “How many are too many to be useful?” We have tried to do a broad range of plausible outcomes. [...] Lots of people would argue, “Couldn’t you just do this? Couldn’t you just do that?”, but there just comes a practical point where we have to have a set that we think is good enough.⁵⁵

39. We asked whether the Department for Transport would publish the National Transport Model, so that it can be independently tested. The Minister declined to do so as “due to the considerable level of complexity, digital infrastructure used and sensitive inputs”, it is “not appropriate to make the model fully available to the public”.⁵⁶ We also asked if the Department could provide a forecast for congestion on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) specifically. The Minister explained that the National Road Traffic Projections include publicly-available data tables on “Lost Time” (in seconds) by road type, which is used to generate projected SRN congestion. He explained that these figures can be manipulated and used to estimate SRN congestion but did not provide his own Department’s estimates based on the data.⁵⁷

Scheme options and alternatives

40. The existing NNNPS contains a section on “Alternatives”. This says that “all projects should be subject to an options appraisal. The appraisal should consider viable modal alternatives and may also consider other options”. It concludes that “the Examining Authority should be satisfied that this assessment has been undertaken”.⁵⁸ The draft revised NNNPS retains a section on Alternatives, but the wording has been amended to say that the options appraisal “*may* include other viable options for achieving the objectives of the project, including (where appropriate) other modes of travel, regulation, or other ways of influencing behaviour” (emphasis added).⁵⁹

41. The draft revised NNNPS also states that where nationally significant road or rail schemes have been identified in “relevant Road or Rail Investment Strategies”, then “proportionate consideration of alternatives will have been undertaken as part of the investment decision making process” and it will “not be necessary” to consider alternatives as part of the scheme’s Development Consent Order examination.⁶⁰ Usually, the consideration of alternatives for a scheme included in a road investment strategy will happen at Project Control Framework stages 0 (strategy, shaping and prioritisation) and 1 (option identification). This process was criticised by Keith Buchan, Skills Director at the Transport Planning Society, as not being transparent enough. He said:

Consideration of alternatives, which is done at a very early stage in most schemes, is done internally. It is unscrutinised. It does not have its own internal champion. It is not done properly. [...] If we were able to bring the consideration of alternatives into the scrutinisable area within the

55 [Q120](#)

56 Correspondence from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, [relating to National Networks National Policy Statement](#), dated 12 August

57 Correspondence from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, [relating to National Networks National Policy Statement](#), dated 12 August 2023

58 Department for Transport, [National Policy Statement for National Networks](#), 2014

59 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

60 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

NSIPs, that would be a tremendous way forward for public confidence in the system. Frankly, if you go to a DCO and see the way they are conducted, public confidence in them is very low.⁶¹

Colin Black, Head of Growth and Future Mobility at AECOM, added that consideration of alternatives prior to NSIP schemes was not comprehensive enough:

We rule out the alternatives [for NSIPs] far too quickly. If there is a highway congestion issue, we might look at four different highway alignments, pick the alignment and move forward as part of that options appraisal. What we do not tend to do is take a more integrated approach and see whether we could cater for the demand or we could satisfy the requirements and the objectives of that project in a different way, using a more integrated approach, working with the local authorities and working across a region.⁶²

42. Mr Black also suggested that this approach to identifying and approving scheme options could create conflict between the transport priorities of the Government on one hand, and those of regional and sub-national transport bodies on the other. He said that the draft revised NNNPS:

does not provide clarity on where the balance of the decision should lie if an area, region, group of local authorities or metropolitan area wishes to adopt a vision and validate approach and to reduce traffic in an area, and there is a highway scheme that is seeking to increase traffic substantially.⁶³

43. The risk that regional priorities might not be recognised in the NSIP development process was raised in our recent inquiry into strategic road investment. Our report highlighted that there is no formal role for sub-national transport bodies in developing NSIP portfolios (which is when options consideration would take place) and recommended that the Government should update National Highways' Licence to include a formal engagement process with the sub-national bodies.⁶⁴ Transport for the North, a sub-national transport body, told us that if the scheme options appraisal process accounted more effectively for strategic cases and wider policy commitments, NSIP options might align more closely with regional goals:

This requires a stronger focus on the strategic case for investment and less emphasis on assessing value for money based on 'value of changes in travel time', which can encourage highway scheme promoters to narrowly focus on solutions that facilitate increased motorised traffic demand, rather than on measures to supporting less polluting and healthier modes of travel.⁶⁵

Exceptional circumstances

44. The Alternatives section of the draft revised NNNPS states that "it should not be necessary to consider alternatives [at DCO stage] except [...] in the wholly exceptional

61 [Q46](#)

62 [Q46](#)

63 [Q52](#)

64 Transport Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2022–23, [Strategic road investment](#), HC 904, para 62

65 Transport for the North ([NPS0013](#))

circumstances where case law would require consideration of alternatives”.⁶⁶ Mustafa Latif-Aramesh, Legal Director at BDB Pitmans, told us that “the Government could give an illustrative list of examples of unexceptional or exceptional circumstances.” He explained that this would “prevent examinations being bogged down” by removing the need to explore whether a given circumstance was indeed exceptional.⁶⁷

Predict and provide?

45. The ‘predict and provide’ approach to transport pursues the demand-led supply of transport infrastructure. In other words: predict future demand for travel, and provide appropriate transport supply to meet that demand. In the Department for Transport’s written evidence to this inquiry, it told us that “the Department is clear that the NNNPS is not based on a ‘predict and provide’ model of road provision”.⁶⁸ The Government has previously distanced itself from a predict and provide approach in its Transport Decarbonisation Plan: “we need to move away from transport planning based on predict and provide to planning that sets an outcome communities want to achieve and provides the transport solutions to deliver those outcomes”.⁶⁹

46. Evidence that we received disputes the Department for Transport’s assertion that the draft revised NNNPS is not based on a predict and provide approach. Phil Goodwin, Emeritus Professor of Transport Policy at University College London, described the draft NNNPS as a “predict and provide core, surrounded by decarbonisation language”.⁷⁰ Glenn Lyons, Professor of Future Mobility at the University of the West of England, said:

This NNNPS revision is tantamount to a perpetuation of the predict and provide paradigm of transport planning which was already living on borrowed time. Its authors appear to have constructed a narrative intent on underlining an inevitability of road traffic growth that in turn lends weight to justification of capacity enhancement schemes. [...] Long live predict and provide it seems.⁷¹

47. The Department has rejected this view and has asserted that, although the NNNPS refers to the forecasts from the 2022 National Road Traffic Projections, which all predict that traffic on the SRN will grow, the draft NNNPS is a way to ensure that demand at the highest end of the scale could be met if required in future.⁷² The Minister told us that “it is not a ‘predict and provide’ approach”.⁷³ We asked whether forecasting traffic levels and building accordingly was a description of a predict and provide approach; he responded “I do not think that it is”.⁷⁴ When we asked for his definition of predict and provide the Minister said:

What we look at is the system on where we are, where things are, as they are at the moment, and then we go through a huge amount of work to validate

66 Department for Transport, [Draft revised national networks national policy statement](#), March 2023

67 [Q46](#)

68 Department for Transport ([NPS0025](#))

69 Department for Transport, [Decarbonising Transport](#), 2021

70 [Q4](#)

71 Professor Glenn Lyons ([NPS0004](#))

72 Department for Transport ([NPS0025](#))

73 [Q128](#)

74 [Q132](#)

what we are saying in that space. That is where the road scheme programmes come from. That is very much a policy decision space as to how we tackle that. A “predict and provide” approach is not what we are driving on.⁷⁵

48. **There is concern from some interested parties that the National Transport Model, which underpins the Statement of Need, does not consider a wide enough range of traffic demand scenarios and that the National Transport Model and congestion forecasts are not published in ways that permit thorough scrutiny of their assumptions. There is also a lack of faith in the options appraisal process for NSIPs before they reach Development Consent Order stage. Finally, there is concern that, while the Department for Transport talks about moving away from ‘predict and provide’, in reality the NSIP regime perpetuates that approach. For promoters of schemes, opponents and the wider public to have confidence in the robustness of the revised NNNPS, greater transparency is needed.**

49. *The Department for Transport must do more to provide transparency on its approach to assessment and decision making. Specifically, it should:*

- *publish the National Transport Model so that it can be independently tested and verified, or model and report on a wider range of scenarios where traffic levels on the SRN are a) reduced and b) maintained at current levels and ambition for rail patronage is increased, as we recommended in our report on strategic road investment;*
- *publish its own estimated congestion forecasts for the Strategic Road Network;*
- *be more transparent in the decision-making process for potential alternatives to NSIP scheme choices, for example at Project Control Framework stages 0 and 1 for road schemes.*
- *provide a list of “exceptional circumstances” which would necessitate consideration of alternative schemes during the Development Consent Order examination process; and*
- *provide examples of how the draft revised NNNPS supports a move away from the ‘predict and provide’ approach to developing NSIPs.*

5 Further recommendations

50. We received several recommendations for amendments to the text of the draft revised NNNPS that would make it more likely to function effectively.

Biodiversity

51. In 2018 the Government published the 25 Year Environment Plan, which was last updated in 2023. The plan aims to “protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats” and “calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first”.⁷⁶ In 2022, an Environment Act introduced a target for “halting the decline in our wildlife populations through a legally binding target for species abundance by 2030 with a requirement to increase species populations by 10 per cent by 2042”.⁷⁷

52. Despite the Government’s longstanding aims and targets for biodiversity, the draft revised NNNPS omits clause 5.29 of the current NNNPS relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest.⁷⁸ Clause 5.29 states:

The Secretary of State should ensure that the applicant’s proposals to mitigate the harmful aspects of the development and, where possible, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the site’s biodiversity or geological interest, are acceptable.⁷⁹

Mustafa Latif-Aramesh, Legal Director at BDB Pitmans, told us that the removal of this clause “gives rise to a potential argument that impacts [on biodiversity] cannot be mitigated or that mitigation should not be provided”.⁸⁰

53. ***The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include an equivalent to Clause 5.29 of the current NNNPS. If the Government declines, it must explain why, and how this is compatible with Government policy on promoting biodiversity.***

Associated development

54. ‘Associated development’ is defined in the Planning Act 2008 as development which is associated with a principal development.⁸¹ The Government has guidance for applicants on associated development which provides examples of general types of associated development, but “it is for the Secretary of State to decide on a case by case basis whether or not development should be treated as associated development”.⁸²

76 HM Government, [A Green Future, Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), 2018

77 Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Natural England, [Delivering on the Environment Act: new targets announced and ambitious plans for nature recovery](#), March 2022

78 BDB Pitmans (NPS0014)

79 Department for Transport, [National Policy Statement for National Networks](#), December 2014

80 BDB Pitmans (NPS0014)

81 Planning Act 2008, [Section 115](#)

82 Department for Communities and Local Government, [Planning Act 2008 Guidance on associated development applications for major infrastructure projects](#), April 2013

Delivering associated development

55. In our report on the road freight supply chain, published in May 2022, we identified the planning process as a key source of delay to the provision of vital logistics infrastructure such as motorway service areas and driver rest facilities.⁸³ We recommended that the Government should reform the planning system to make it easier to deliver driver rest facilities and ensure that decisions for new facilities are not left to individual planning authorities. In its response, the Government told us that it “recognises the need for modernisation and reform to the planning system”.⁸⁴ In July 2023, the Department for Transport opened a call for evidence on freight, logistics and the planning system.⁸⁵

56. During this inquiry, we heard that associated development could be more effectively delivered if it was included as part of major infrastructure. Colin Black, Head of Growth and Future Mobility at AECOM, explained:

In terms of efficiency and achieving policy objectives, it would be much more helpful if they were incorporated as a requirement within the scheme, rather than our having to deal with them separately. It takes years after a major scheme has been approved to provide all the ancillary infrastructure that is required to support it.⁸⁶

Keith Buchan, Skills Director at the Transport Planning Society, said that he “agreed 100 per cent” with Mr Black’s assessment.⁸⁷ Transport Action Network suggested that associated development should itself be considered nationally significant infrastructure.⁸⁸

57. David Buttery, Roads Strategy Director at the Department for Transport told us that:

our current view is that, no, we should not [include associated development as part of major infrastructure]. Because the Development Consent Order process is meant for big infrastructure, it brings a lot of the assessment work and the public engagement up front.⁸⁹

Richard Holden, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Roads, added that putting driver rest sites that had already been proposed through the Development Consent Order process, rather than through a local planning process, could significantly delay improvements for lorry drivers.⁹⁰

58. In its response to its call for evidence on freight, logistics and the planning system, the Department for Transport should address whether some types associated development which are vital to the road freight supply chain, such as driver rest facilities or service areas, would be more effectively delivered if considered part of major infrastructure and approved by Development Consent Order. In our 2022 inquiry on

83 Transport Committee, First Report of Session 2022–23, [Road freight supply chain](#), HC 162 incorporating HC 828 of Session 2021–22

84 Transport Committee, Second Special Report of Session 2022–23, [Road freight supply chain: Government response to the Committee’s First Report](#), HC 701

85 Department for Transport and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Freight, logistics and the planning system: call for evidence](#), July 2023

86 [Q60](#)

87 [Q60](#)

88 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))

89 [Q151](#)

90 [Q151](#)

the road freight supply chain we heard that the process of building a new motorway service area can take a decade, and that the planning process is a key source of delay; the Government needs to cut through this quagmire to deliver the facilities that are desperately needed.

59. Robbie Owen, Board Secretary and Director at the National Infrastructure Planning Association, told us that the updating the NNNPS to clarify what ancillaries should be “properly associated” with major infrastructure would reduce time spent deliberating during the approval process. This is currently only provided as supplementary guidance. Mr Owen said:

The key point is that a judgment always has to be made by a project promoter as to what it will include in the application by way of ancillary or associated development. The NPS should provide clarity on the policies, just as it does in relation to the main component of the scheme. [...] That would be very helpful.⁹¹

60. *The Government should amend the draft revised NNNPS to clarify, by way of providing a list of examples, what would normally be deemed to be ‘associated development’ for schemes which meet the threshold for nationally significant infrastructure.*

Integration with non-motorised transport

61. CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire told us that the draft revised NNNPS is not sufficiently integrated with national level land use policies, local plans or national policies for walking and cycling, and that the Government should develop a “holistic integrated national transport strategy”.⁹² Transport for the North emphasised that major infrastructure projects in urban areas are likely to share transport corridors with public transport and people walking and cycling, and that greater clarity should be provided on “balancing the needs of different modes within a limited availability of road spaces.”⁹³

62. We also heard that the draft revised NNNPS does not adequately outline acceptable standards for vulnerable road users. Cycling UK told us that the draft revised NNNPS “fails” to cite a requirement for cycling provision to be made in accordance with the National Highways design standard CD 195, ‘Designing for Cycle Traffic for motorways and trunk roads’.⁹⁴ The function of CD 195 is to provide:

requirements and advice relevant to the motorway and trunk road network for the design of infrastructure for cycle traffic. It is intended to be used by highway design professionals to facilitate the convenient and safe movement of cycle traffic, where cycling is legally permitted.⁹⁵

63. While cycling is typically not permitted on motorways or trunk roads themselves, there are often crossing points on the Strategic Road Network for people walking, cycling and riding horses, and adjoining infrastructure for vulnerable road users. Cycling UK

91 [Q60](#)

92 CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire ([NPS0010](#))

93 Transport for the North ([NPS0013](#))

94 Cycling UK ([NPS0020](#))

95 Highways England [National Highways], [CD 195 - Designing for cycle traffic](#), 2021

argued that the absence of the requirement for CD 195 has resulted in “inadequate” cycling provision for motorways and trunk roads.⁹⁶ In the case of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road scheme, the DCO Inspector said that “far more could have been done to provide for non-motorised users” but that there was no compulsion on National Highways to do so.⁹⁷ National Highways’ guidance is therefore “intended” to be used, but there is no requirement for this to be done.

64. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include a stronger requirement for scheme applicants to adhere to the cycling infrastructure design standards set out in CD 195.*

Application to non-NSIP schemes

65. The NNNPS only applies to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), but we heard that its influence could be helpful in providing a more solid policy basis for smaller schemes or for those that are complex and large in scale but do not meet the Planning Act threshold for being classed as nationally significant. An example of such a scheme is the Transpennine Route Upgrade, a multi-billion pound project to upgrade the 76-mile Transpennine rail line between York and Manchester.⁹⁸

66. Robbie Owen, Board Secretary and Director at the National Infrastructure Planning Association, told us that the draft revised NNNPS was a “missed opportunity” to provide stronger policy support for rail projects beneath the NSIPs threshold, by linking the NNNPS to the primary consenting regime for rail projects which falls under the Transport and Works Act 1992. He said:

this NPS is capable of being a very material consideration when it comes to deciding applications for Transport and Work Act orders. We think that it would be really helpful to guide all concerned, not just applicants, if the NNNPS were clearer on the extent to which it applies to non-DCO rail projects.⁹⁹

67. Transport Action Network agreed that the NNNPS could help deliver the consenting of infrastructure beneath the NSIP threshold, and also emphasised that at present, the NNNPS is often the only policy available to guide smaller scale transport schemes. Transport Action Network said:

Additional supportive policy is required for schemes that may proceed via Transport and Works Act orders, such as trams, other light rail, trolley bus networks and electric road systems (for lorries and potentially coaches) and other urban public transport systems. The opportunity should be taken to rethink the name of this NNNPS to come up with something more inclusive and integrated.¹⁰⁰

96 Cycling UK ([NPS0020](#))

97 The Planning Inspectorate, [A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Road Improvement scheme - Examining Authority's Report of Findings and Conclusions, May 2022](#)

98 Network Rail, [Transpennine Route Upgrade](#)

99 [Q59](#)

100 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))

68. Colin Black, Head of Growth and Future Mobility at AECOM, said that explicitly showing how the NNNPS could guide smaller projects out of its scope is a “very valid” concept that could bring better scrutiny “to smaller schemes.”¹⁰¹ He said that, currently, there is effectively a “two-tier system” where projects which are not nationally significant but still of “substantial and significant size” receive “a different level of rigour” in terms of scrutiny.¹⁰²

69. We also asked the Minister and his officials whether the NNNPS could be clearer about how it applies to smaller schemes. Dan Moore, Rail Strategy and Rail Analysis Director at the Department for Transport, did not agree that this would be necessary. He told us:

My view on this is that the system is reasonably clear already. Ultimately, if it does not meet the thresholds in relation to the Planning Act, it is a Transport and Works Act scheme. It is very clear to promoters exactly where they need to go. [...] I have not heard a large call over the years for a substantial change there.¹⁰³

70. The NNNPS could be a helpful document when making decisions on transport schemes which are not classed as nationally significant but are still large scale or regionally important. These schemes are currently consented through the Transport and Works Act and receive a less rigorous level of scrutiny.

71. The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include provision which makes it clear how the NNNPS could be a relevant policy consideration for non-NSIP schemes which are currently consented under the Transport and Works Act.

101 [Q58](#)

102 [Q58](#)

103 [Q152](#)

6 Restructuring the National Policy Statements for transport

72. Currently there are separate National Policy Statements for National Networks (designated in January 2015),¹⁰⁴ Ports (designated in January 2012)¹⁰⁵ and Airports (designated in June 2018).¹⁰⁶ We heard that a more effective way to structure the National Policy Statements for transport could be to have one over-arching “Transport” National Policy Statement, with separate modes catered for by sub-statements. The Government may want to consider the multi-modal strategic approach taken by the Scottish Government.

73. The focus throughout this inquiry has primarily fallen on the national road network, with rail and strategic rail freight interchanges taking a back seat. Robbie Owen, Board Secretary and Director at the National Infrastructure Planning Association, said that attention for each mode in the NNNPS could be more “sharply focused” if each had its own statement.¹⁰⁷ The National Infrastructure Planning Association told us that:

Government transport policy might be more clearly and coherently articulated were the transport National Policy Statements restructured in a way that mirrors the suite of energy National Policy Statements. For example, an Overarching Transport NPS (TR-1) setting out the Government’s policy for the delivery of major transport infrastructure, together with sector-specific NPSs for road (TR-2), rail and SRFIs (TR-3), ports (TR-4) and airports (TR-5).¹⁰⁸

74. David BATTERY, Roads Strategy Director at the Department for Transport, told us that the National Policy Statements for transport are organised as they are because “what we have done is to put the two bits that are caught by the DCO regime together to try to get that multi-modal thinking where it triggers this part of the Planning Act”.¹⁰⁹ It is not clear why ports and airports are not also grouped in this way, as they too are considered nationally significant and “caught” by the DCO regime. Airports and ports are also accessed by road and rail and are presumably also worthy of multi-modal consideration; at present the Ports and Airports National Policy Statements stand on their own.

75. *The Government should consider the merits of restructuring future iterations of the National Policy Statements for transport so that there is an over-arching Transport NPS, with Road, Rail, Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, Ports, and Airport NPSs sitting underneath it, and provide a clear rationale if it opts not to do so.*

104 Department for Transport, [National Policy Statement for National Networks](#), December 2014

105 Department for Transport, [National Policy Statement for Ports](#), January 2012

106 Department for Transport, [Airports National Policy Statement](#), June 2018

107 [Q43](#)

108 National Infrastructure Planning Association ([NPS0024](#))

109 [Q109](#)

Conclusions and recommendations

The review process

1. The review of the NNNPS was overdue. It was launched to bring the policy framework for major infrastructure schemes up to date, and as a response to legal challenges to schemes prompted by the introduction of significant net zero legislation. The Government should have been proactive and reviewed the NNNPS upon the introduction of net zero targets, and should do so when any changes are made to the net zero target policies. (Paragraph 18)
2. *The Government should introduce five-year review periods for the NNNPS, with a shorter term where changes in policy decisions or policy drivers warrant it. This does not necessarily mean that wholesale revisions should be made to the NNNPS every five years, but the reviews would provide an opportunity for the Department for Transport to consider the wider policy environment and Government priorities. The Government could also consider the modular approach suggested by the National Infrastructure Commission.* (Paragraph 19)

Legal challenges to schemes on climate grounds

3. The draft revised NNNPS attempts to balance the Government's 2050 net zero targets with an NSIP regime which could potentially increase greenhouse gas emissions. While the document provides guidance on assessing, mitigating, and approving the greenhouse gas emissions of schemes, these measures could be stronger to align with the pathway to net zero. (Paragraph 27)
4. *The Government should respond to the Climate Change Committee's recommendation on reviewing the roads programme and explain why this recommendation will or will not be taken forward. The Climate Change Committee's recommendations do not relate directly to the NNNPS, but acceptance of them would change the policy environment in which the NNNPS operates and, presumably, prompt further review. Obtaining clarity on this issue is important for establishing whether challenges to NSIPs on climate grounds are likely to continue.* (Paragraph 28)
5. The draft NNNPS permits "residual" greenhouse gas emissions from NSIPs, but does not define what "residual" means, nor does it set out a threshold or limits for a level of emissions that would be deemed "residual". Accordingly, schemes which are likely to cause an increase in carbon emissions may remain vulnerable to legal challenge. (Paragraph 31)
6. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to provide a definition of, and clear and comprehensive guidance on, "residual" greenhouse gas emissions. This definition must make it possible to distinguish clearly between "residual" and unacceptable increases in emissions from an NSIP.* (Paragraph 32)

7. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to explicitly state the Government's understanding of the legal precedent for permitting major infrastructure schemes which result in an increase in emissions, where that increase is judged as not likely to harm the achievement of a national target. (Paragraph 35)*

Confidence and transparency

8. There is concern from some interested parties that the National Transport Model, which underpins the Statement of Need, does not consider a wide enough range of traffic demand scenarios and that the National Transport Model and congestion forecasts are not published in ways that permit thorough scrutiny of their assumptions. There is also a lack of faith in the options appraisal process for NSIPs before they reach Development Consent Order stage. Finally, there is concern that, while the Department for Transport talks about moving away from 'predict and provide', in reality the NSIP regime perpetuates that approach. For promoters of schemes, opponents and the wider public to have confidence in the robustness of the revised NNNPS, greater transparency is needed. (Paragraph 48)
9. *The Department for Transport must do more to provide transparency on its approach to assessment and decision making. Specifically, it should:*
 - *publish the National Transport Model so that it can be independently tested and verified, or model and report on a wider range of scenarios where traffic levels on the SRN are a) reduced and b) maintained at current levels and ambition for rail patronage is increased, as we recommended in our report on strategic road investment;*
 - *publish its own estimated congestion forecasts for the Strategic Road Network;*
 - *be more transparent in the decision-making process for potential alternatives to NSIP scheme choices, for example at Project Control Framework stages 0 and 1 for road schemes.*
 - *provide a list of "exceptional circumstances" which would necessitate consideration of alternative schemes during the Development Consent Order examination process; and*
 - *provide examples of how the draft revised NNNPS supports a move away from the 'predict and provide' approach to developing NSIPs. (Paragraph 49)*

Further recommendations

10. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include an equivalent to Clause 5.29 of the current NNNPS. If the Government declines, it must explain why, and how this is compatible with Government policy on promoting biodiversity. (Paragraph 53)*
11. *In its response to its call for evidence on freight, logistics and the planning system, the Department for Transport should address whether some types associated development which are vital to the road freight supply chain, such as driver rest facilities or service areas, would be more effectively delivered if considered part of major infrastructure*

and approved by Development Consent Order. In our 2022 inquiry on the road freight supply chain we heard that the process of building a new motorway service area can take a decade, and that the planning process is a key source of delay; the Government needs to cut through this quagmire to deliver the facilities that are desperately needed. (Paragraph 58)

12. *The Government should amend the draft revised NNNPS to clarify, by way of providing a list of examples, what would normally be deemed to be ‘associated development’ for schemes which meet the threshold for nationally significant infrastructure. (Paragraph 60)*
13. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include a stronger requirement for scheme applicants to adhere to the cycling infrastructure design standards set out in CD 195. (Paragraph 64)*
14. *The NNNPS could be a helpful document when making decisions on transport schemes which are not classed as nationally significant but are still large scale or regionally important. These schemes are currently consented through the Transport and Works Act and receive a less rigorous level of scrutiny. (Paragraph 70)*
15. *The draft revised NNNPS should be amended to include provision which makes it clear how the NNNPS could be a relevant policy consideration for non-NSIP schemes which are currently consented under the Transport and Works Act. (Paragraph 71)*

Restructuring the National Policy Statements for transport

16. *The Government should consider the merits of restructuring future iterations of the National Policy Statements for transport so that there is an over-arching Transport NPS, with Road, Rail, Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, Ports, and Airport NPSs sitting underneath it, and provide a clear rationale if it opts not to do so. (Paragraph 75)*

Formal minutes

Tuesday 17 October 2023

Members present:

Iain Stewart, in the Chair

Jack Brereton

Paul Howell

Karl McCartney

Grahame Morris

Gavin Newlands

Draft Report (*Draft revised National Policy Statement for National Networks*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 75 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Ninth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

[Adjourned till tomorrow at 9.30 am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 28 June 2023

Rosie Allen, Policy Adviser, Green Alliance; **Professor Phil Goodwin**, Emeritus Professor of Transport Policy, University College London (UCL); **Ralph Smyth**, Consultant, Transport Action Network [Q1–39](#)

Robbie Owen, Board Secretary and Director, National Infrastructure Planning Association; **Colin Black**, Head of Growth and Future Mobility, AECOM; **Keith Buchan**, Skills Director and former Chair, Transport Planning Society; **Mustafa Latif-Aramesh**, Legal Director, BDB Pitmans [Q40–63](#)

Wednesday 19 July 2023

Steve Gooding, Director, RAC Foundation; **Martin Tugwell**, Chief Executive, Transport for the North; **Julian Worth**, Chair of Rail Freight Forum, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport [Q64–101](#)

Richard Holden MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport; **David Buttery**, Roads Strategy Director, Department for Transport; **Dan Moore**, Rail Strategy and Rail Analysis Director, Department for Transport [Q102–152](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

NPS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 ASLEF ([NPS0002](#))
- 2 BDB Pitmans ([NPS0014](#))
- 3 CPRE Peak District and SOuth Yorkshire ([NPS0010](#))
- 4 Campaign for Better Transport ([NPS0021](#))
- 5 Climate Emergency Policy and Planning (CEPP) ([NPS0016](#))
- 6 Cycling UK ([NPS0020](#))
- 7 Department for Transport ([NPS0025](#))
- 8 England's Economic Heartland ([NPS0015](#))
- 9 Friends of Carrington Moss ([NPS0008](#))
- 10 Getlink Group ([NPS0006](#))
- 11 Green Alliance ([NPS0026](#))
- 12 Green Alliance ([NPS0007](#))
- 13 Hawker, Richard ([NPS0023](#))
- 14 Lyons, Professor Glenn (Mott MacDonald Professor of Future Mobility, University of the West of England, Bristol) ([NPS0004](#))
- 15 Metz, Dr David (honorary professor, UCL Centre for Transport Studies) ([NPS0001](#))
- 16 Midlands Connect ([NPS0012](#))
- 17 National Infrastructure Planning Association ([NPS0024](#))
- 18 Rail Freight Group ([NPS0003](#))
- 19 Sustrans ([NPS0011](#))
- 20 Thames Crossing Action Group ([NPS0017](#))
- 21 Transport Action Network ([NPS0027](#))
- 22 Transport Action Network ([NPS0022](#))
- 23 Transport for West Midlands ([NPS0018](#))
- 24 Transport for West Midlands ([NPS0019](#))
- 25 Transport for the North ([NPS0013](#))
- 26 What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth ([NPS0009](#))
- 27 Woodland Trust ([NPS0005](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Road freight supply chain	HC 162
2nd	The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands	HC 292
3rd	Fuelling the future: motive power and connectivity	HC 159
4th	Implementation of the National Bus Strategy	HC 161
5th	Maritime 2050	HC 160
6th	Strategic road investment	HC 904
7th	Self-driving vehicles	HC 519
8th	Minimum service levels for rail	HC 1153
1st Special	UK aviation: reform for take-off: Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 542
2nd Special	Road freight supply chain: Government response to the Committee's First Report	HC 701
3rd Special	Road Pricing: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 1178
4th Special	Fuelling the future: motive power and connectivity: Government response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1382
5th Special	Maritime 2050: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 1420
6th Special	Implementation of the National Bus Strategy: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1431
7th Special	The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands: Government response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1729

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Zero emission vehicles	HC 27
2nd	Major transport infrastructure projects	HC 24
3rd	Rollout and safety of smart motorways	HC 26
4th	Road pricing	HC 789
5th	UK aviation: reform for take-off	HC 683

Number	Title	Reference
1st Special	The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation sector: Interim report: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 28
2nd Special	Road safety: young and novice drivers: Government Response to Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 29
3rd Special	Trains Fit for the Future? Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 249
4th Special	Safe return of international travel? Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2019–21	HC 489
5th Special	Zero emission vehicles: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 759
6th Special	Rollout and safety of smart motorways: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1020
7th Special	Major transport infrastructure projects: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 938

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1st	Appointment of the Chair of the Civil Aviation Authority	HC 354
2nd	The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation sector	HC 268
3rd	E-scooters: pavement nuisance or transport innovation?	HC 255
4th	Road safety: young and novice drivers	HC 169
5th	The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the aviation sector: Interim report	HC 1257
6th	Trains fit for the future?	HC 876
7th	Safe return of international travel?	HC 1341