



HeadsUp Forum # 30

www.HeadsUp.org.uk

Transport... Have the wheels come off?

(20 April – 8 May 2009)

A wide range of views and expertise were represented by the decision-makers. Their involvement and support was, as always, crucial to the success of the forum. 13 legislators were involved in providing a statement for the *Transport* forum Backup materials or taking part in the debate.

They were:

- **Stephen Hammond MP** – Shadow Transport Minister
- **Norman Baker MP** – Liberal Democrat Shadow Transport Minister
- **Louise Ellman MP** – Chair, Transport Select Committee
- **Paul Rowen MP** - Chair, Light Rail Parliamentary Group
- **Lord Faulkner of Worcester** - Vice President, Campaign for Better Transport
- **Robert Gifford** - Executive Director, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety
- **Alistair Goulding** - Project Officer, Sustrans
- **Jim Boyd** - Group Corporate Affairs Director, The Go-Ahead Group plc
- **Conor Murphy MLA** – Minister for Regional Development, Northern Ireland Assembly
- **David Taylor MP** – Member, Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Select Committee

www.headsup.org.uk is a safe, online space for under 18s to debate the political issues important to them. **Young people** share viewpoints with their peers and **decision-makers** up and down the country. Through the forums, HeadsUp develops **young people's** political awareness and promotes active citizenship so they can play an effective part in the democratic processes that affect them.

HeadsUp enables **politicians** to consult with **young people**, to find out their ideas, experiences and opinions. There is ample background information to prepare **young people** for the debates, as well as **teachers'** notes and activities.

- **John Leech MP** - Liberal Democrat Transport Spokesperson
- **Mark Lazarowicz MP** – Member, Environmental Audit Committee
- **Lord Soley of Hammersmith** - Campaign Director, Future Heathrow

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Forum Summary

There were 123 posts made in the forum from 62 HeadsUp users[∞] - with an average of 350 unique daily visits to the site over the course of the forum. The discussions on the forum were broad but the general themes and directions of the debate are highlighted in the pages below along with practical suggestions given by forum users. All the quotes below are replicated exactly and not corrected or amended by the HeadsUp team.

The debate was split into four different forum threads addressing the significant issues in the wider debate about transport. These were:

- **Airport Expansion** – Do we really need bigger airports or should we put more investment into the rail network?
- **Climate Change** – Is enough being invested in greener transport?
- **Transport and You** - What are the problems with public transport where you live?
- **The Economy** – Will people be tempted to holiday closer to home during the economic downturn?

Student Fares

The cost of fares for under 18's and students was one of the biggest issues on the forum. Many HeadsUp users thought that public services in their local area were too expensive and not reliable enough. Forum users emphasised the fact that public services impact much more on young people and students as they are not allowed to drive until they are 17 and generally have less money to spend on travelling than adults do.

[∞] Includes: young people, moderators, teachers and decision-makers.

Me and my friends take the train a lot, so we can visit places further away from where we live, but it is so expensive that it's almost not worth going. If we want to go to Reading to go shopping, we end up spending most of our money on the tickets...

teenagers who... cannot afford to learn to drive or have a car depend on public transport. It is hard to attend interviews on time when buses are running late or do not arrive.

i have to pay adult fare, as i dont have a student card, but it costs me £1.70 to go 5 miles from A-B, and then £2.10 to go 8 miles from A-C(by Stagecoach bus).This is really bad, considering i only pay 90p to do the same length of journey by bus in Blackpool!

The discrepancies between pricing for different age groups in different areas was also seen as unfair and not set out clearly enough by the train and bus companies. One HeadsUp user wanted to find out if there were national caps on the amount bus and train companies can charge students as the fares appear to differ so much.

i will fight hard for change to get fairer and more consistent bus fares and times make them obey to the law. I would like to know whats the law on student- free bus travel or concessions? Is there a maximum fare price? Are there any laws on this or any proposals or reforms for change?

the last time I went to Reading with my friend, she paid £10, because she was fifteen, and I paid £20, because I was 16. How can there be such a difference between 15 and 16?! They need to lower the price of train travel, or at least have some cheaper prices for students who don't have much money.

Public Transport

Other issues outside the pricing and student fares debates about public transport were, the lack of a reliable and frequent service, dirty trains and buses, as well as anti-social behaviour on public transport.

there is the problem of hourly buses which a few of my friends catch. Why don't the stations try something like investigating on average, how many people catch the bus a day and if they're making enough profit they could run a couple more buses at the busier times?

antisocial behaviour- i hate using my buses because of all the yobs who use them- the bottom deck is full, so i go upstairs and hooray, i have to spend 20 minutes listening to really loud heavy metal music ... every bus has CCTV, so why is nothing done to stop them ruining the journey for other people?!

Forum users that discussed taxes spent on public transport thought that the economic downturn would have a negative effect on the amount spent on transport.

i say nationalise the bus and train companies again. Public transport should be run as a service, not a business, and the needs of the public should come first.

Public transport is not an efficient way to make money, and I imagine the government will spend more money we don't have on buying 'toxic debt'.

Spending money on public transport also in turn decreases the fuel tax the government take, which is extortionate. Whilst improvements to public transport would be welcome, the government see it as a financial black hole, so I imagine it won't happen in the near future.

However few thought reducing spending on transport was a good thing and suggested that economic problems would make the need for public transport greater.

Driving

Many of the users felt that it was too expensive to learn to drive as well as to run a car to make it a viable alternative for them to public transport.

when young people have learnt to drive a lot of them cannot afford their own cars so they may rely on the parent or guardians car and then they will only be allowed to use it when it is free. When I have learnt to drive and I have passed my test I am still going to rely on public transport as I will not have a car of my own. I will not be able to afford the petrol and insurance costs that there is on a car so I will still take the bus into town

Most felt that 16 or 17 was about the right age to learn to drive. There were quite a few suggestions from forum users about good ways to reduce accidents on the road, particularly among young people, as well as effective ways to tackle speeding.

I think the driving age should be raised to 18. The extra year should be spent on motorway, wet weather and night driving, so drivers are confident in all conditions. This would reduce accidents. Drivers should also be tested driving more powerful cars, so they feel confident with different car characteristics.

I think that normal speed cameras (Instant Velocity Cameras) do not work, although their average speed counterparts do. This is because people just slow down for the camera, and then speed up again. Yet with average speed cameras people have to keep a constant speed throughout the camera zone.

One forum user suggested that actually young people became more responsible as they learnt to drive and it was not always true that they were more accident prone on the roads than older people.

I know more older people that are less responsible on the roads than I do younger people because teenagers start to feel responsible when they start driving. Older people get bored.

Another user suggested that to reduce accidents and improve driving standards all drivers should re-take their driving test regularly to ensure they were safe drivers.

with regard to the driving age, I say stick with 17, but have compulsory "re-tests" every 20 years.

Cycling

Some HeadsUp users mentioned cycling but most seemed to rely on public transport to get around, particularly buses. Those that cycled thought that for short journeys bikes were a good alternative to driving or public transport and were, in some instances, quicker than other forms of transport. Reservations about cycling were mainly about the safety of cyclists on the road and the lack of provision for bikes along the routes that young people were likely to use in their area.

I find a 30 minute cycle ride to Asda is far more enjoyable than a 10 minute bus ride. However, some people are put off by cycling on busy roads, and with large lorries overtaking. I think that more provisions should be put in place to enable cyclists to cycle freely down busy roads.

International travel

Although economic reasons were often behind suggestions for holidaying closer to home, many of the forum users emphasised what beautiful countryside there was in the UK to enjoy without going abroad. The leaders' of the main political parties also holidaying in the UK was seen as supportive of this viewpoint that Britain has much to offer.

I believe that people are starting to realise that it is cheaper to stay in Great Britain and it can be fun. Tourism has increased drastically in the UK during this recession and hopefully our economy will see the benefits

there are plenty of wonderful places in the UK that many people are currently missing out on because they have just been going abroad rather than staying closer to home! I heard about David Cameron spending his hols in Cornwall too, Chilli, and I also agree that it was probably partly his way of showing people that holidaying in this country was just as good as going abroad-but he probably also wanted to go to Cornwall anyway, as it's one of the most beautiful places in the world-in my humble opinion...!

Climate change

Some suggestions to reduce emissions from transport were more investment in teleconferencing facilities and working from home as well as improved green technologies to reduce emissions from cars. Few users were impressed with electric cars or the subsidies the Government are offering to encourage people to trade in their less efficient petrol cars.

the best way to reduce transport emissions is to invest in teleconferencing. This allows people to more easily work from home and drops the need to travel between places.

an electric car costs a lot more than the amount GB is offering drivers, there is virtually nowhere outside of the US to recharge them, and how many people are actually going to sell their current, useable cars just so they can be given money to buy a new one?!

There was also disagreement about whether the Government should be trying to encourage people out of their cars or whether it should be down to the individual.

Many users on the forum felt that there should be more emphasis on and investment in renewable fuels and more efficient forms of transport.

in reality, cars and other vehicles are necessary for everyday life, and however many government incentives people have, if they need to use a car then they will do. people need cars on a regular basis. it is our job to ensure that the cars available to buy are those which use renewable energy sources. the government would do better to concentrate on the future.

more research should be put into perfecting alternative fuels.

I think that a government based advertising campaign against carbon emissions and encouraging public transport would strongly influence people to start cycling catch a bus or a train more often, reduce air travel and maybe stop people using their cars.

Airport expansion

Views about airport expansion, particularly the recent debate about a third runway at Heathrow, were quite mixed. 58 per cent of HeadsUp users were against the expansion of Heathrow - either because they thought other forms of transport, such as trains, should be prioritised, that other airports in the South East were better candidates for expansion, or simply because they thought airport expansion was unnecessary at the current time.

I don't think we need another runway as we are knocking down villages especially as housing is a big problem in the UK at the moment.

A third runway would make hundreds of people homeless, without schools and services, all to get more people OUT of the country. I think money should be spent to make holidays within the UK a more attractive prospect

Although there are potentially many problems with a new runway, the prospect that would appeal to many politicians around this time are the jobs brought about by a new runway, both long and short term.

the airport already has enough airplanes coming and going that are polluting the air so having another runway increasing the number airplanes coming and going would not do any good. We are trying to cut down on the number of planes in the sky and not increase.

I think a new runway will benefit the economy at a time when it is much needed. More tourists and trade can come to the country, and jobs in aviation would be created to help the unemployment issue.

The main benefits of a new runway that HeadsUp users mentioned were the increase in jobs and trade at a time of economic uncertainty.



Political Context

The HeadsUp forum on transport came at a time when issues around transport provision appeared to be high on the Government's agenda. Gordon Brown announced an initiative, a few days before the forum, to encourage people to trade in their old petrol cars in return for a discount on a new electric car. The decision was made on controversial plans to build a third runway at Heathrow a couple of months before the forum began – although environmental organisations and groups protesting about the loss of homes and villages in the proposed area have pledged to challenge the decision through the courts.

HeadsUp makes sure that young people's views on transport are sent to the appropriate policy-makers, journalists and politicians so they can take into account young people's views on the issues.

The HeadsUp team would like to convey our thanks and appreciation to the decision-makers, young people and teachers that got involved in this important debate. We would also like to extend an invitation to interested parties, particularly legislators and government, interested NGOs, academics and journalists to respond to the findings. Please disseminate this report to any interested colleagues or contacts.

Responses and requests for further information should be directed to:

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