

Alternatives to Travel: a Call for Evidence

Guidance document

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1. Responding to this Call for Evidence

This Call for Evidence is published in order to assist with the development of a longer term alternatives to travel strategy.

This is the main guidance document relating to the Call for Evidence. A questionnaire which should be used to submit your responses and evidence is available on the Department's website at www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2011-10/. You are strongly recommended to complete the questionnaire in conjunction with reading this guidance document, which explains in detail the information we are seeking.

There are two main ways to provide evidence to this Call for Evidence. The easiest is to complete the questionnaire either electronically (MS Word version) and return to us by email, or to print it (either PDF or MS Word version), hand-write your answers and return to the address at the end of this document. We unfortunately cannot accept faxed copies of the questionnaire.

As an alternative, you may wish to write your response yourself. In this case we ask that you refer to the question numbers in the questionnaire to help us in considering your response.

Using the Questionnaire

If you need help or advice in completing the questionnaire please refer to the contact information at the end of this document. You may also wish to contact us if your access needs mean a different method of response would be more appropriate.

2. Submitting the Questionnaire

Once you have completed the questionnaire please return it to the Department for Transport via one of the following methods. Please note that all responses must be received by **31st May 2011**.

Responding by email:

If you have completed this form electronically please first save the document, and then email it to: alison.franks@dft.gsi.gov.uk. Please note that you will not receive confirmation of receipt.

Responding by post:

If you have completed this questionnaire by hand please post it to the following address:

Alison Franks
3/25, Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DR

3. Call for Evidence

Introduction

The Local Transport White Paper *Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon* was launched in January this year and set out the Government's vision for a local sustainable transport system that supports the economy and reduces carbon emissions.

Getting the economy back on track means making sure people can get to work, to the shops or to their local amenities. And tackling climate change means encouraging smarter ways of getting around.

We want to encourage people to make journeys by sustainable, low-carbon, modes of transport. But we also want to encourage the use of alternatives to travel.

For the first time, we have ensured that alternatives to travel – in other words not travelling, is an element within the Ministerial portfolio. Of course promoting alternatives to travel does not mean we are seeking to stop people travelling, we are simply encouraging individuals and businesses to use alternatives where they feel these would be appropriate.

Many businesses and organisations are already successfully using various alternatives to travel, ranging from teleconferencing, videoconferencing and web-conferencing, to working flexible hours, and working remotely – either from home or from a remote hub.

With this Call for Evidence, we are seeking contributions from a wide range of businesses, sectors, organisations and individuals, which document experiences and impacts of, and the future potential for, using alternatives to travel. In addition, we are interested to hear from those not currently making use of such alternatives about the reasons behind this.

The Call for Evidence will inform the development of a longer term strategy on alternatives to travel. And this in turn will ensure that alongside improved local sustainable travel choices, alternatives to travel can play a key role in creating economic growth and cutting carbon.

Definition of Alternatives to Travel

This Call for Evidence is focussing on measures which can reduce travel for work (commuting and business trips) or which can help reduce travel

for work during peak times. Therefore the travel alternatives that we are seeking to investigate, include:

- a. Home working and remote working;
- b. Flexible working and staggered hours (in order to reduce travel during peak periods);
- c. Teleconferencing and videoconferencing;
- d. Any other alternatives to travel which can help reduce work-related travel.

Purpose of the Call for Evidence

With this Call for Evidence we are inviting stakeholders to provide us with information about which alternatives to travel are already in use in their workplace(s), what the drivers were to these being implemented, and what the impacts have been, both positive and negative. We would also like to hear about why some alternatives to travel are not in use, and if this is due to particular barriers, what these are and how they could be overcome.

We are interested in hearing from a wide variety of stakeholders, including those not currently using alternatives to travel. We are particularly interested to hear from the following:

- Small, medium and large businesses;
- Public sector bodies;
- Community groups;
- Local Enterprise Partnerships and other local development bodies;
- Individuals;
- Academics;
- Representative bodies;
- Freight and logistics sector;
- Telecommunications sector;
- Voluntary and social enterprise sector.

About you

To assist us in analysing the information we receive, we will ask you for the following information about you and your organisation.

- Your name and contact details;
- Whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation;
- What your role is within that organisation;
- Further details about the organisation (size, sector, location, staff profile);
- Whether you/your organisation would like your response to the Call for Evidence to be confidential and your reasons for this.

4. Alternatives to Travel

In this section we will ask you for information and evidence on the use of alternatives to travel in your workplace. We welcome both qualitative information (eg copies of policies, feedback from staff) and quantitative information (eg data from staff surveys, data on sickness absences and leavers).

Home working and remote working

Home working is already fairly widespread; according to the 2010 Labour Force Survey¹; between April and June 2010 almost 12% of the workforce surveyed had spent at least one hour working from home in the previous week, whilst around 3% of the workforce worked mainly at or from home.

Individuals and organisations have reported that home working can result in various benefits, for example employees are able to reduce time spent commuting and improve their work/life balance whilst for organisations this can help reduce staff turnover and reduce office and parking space requirements and therefore business costs. Business travel costs may also be reduced. However, there are also some indications that working from home/remotely can lead to staff working longer hours. There may also be other negative impacts, for example an increased number of local trips to shops / school etc. Barriers to home and remote working may include the need/desire for client and customer contact, or even the reluctance of managers/employers to support such alternatives to travel.

As well as impacting on employees and employers, working from home and working remotely can have wider impacts. For example, if more people work from home or closer to home in remote hubs, this could help to reduce congestion, particularly at peak times, resulting in economic benefits. Additionally, more people working at home or nearer home, may help to support local communities, as people may make greater use of facilities, such as shops and services, close to where they live.

Q1a & b: Which measures have been implemented in your organisation to support home working and remote working?

We would like to hear more about the measures which have been implemented in your workplace in order to support **a) home working and b) remote working**. These might include particular policies which might have been introduced for all employees or just for particular teams or departments. Any information about the reasons for encouraging working from

¹ Refers to the 2010 Labour Force Survey undertaken between April and June 2010. See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Source.asp?vlnk=358&More=Y> for further details.

home/remotely would be welcome as would any data about the percentage of staff working from home or remotely. Please include as much detail as possible.

Q2a & b: What have been the barriers to supporting a) home working and b) remote working? Or if a) home working and b) remote working have not been implemented in your organisation, what do you consider are the reasons for this?

Flexible working and staggered hours

Flexible working can take a number of forms, including part-time working, working compressed or annualised hours, or working on 'flexi-time' where staff are required to work during set 'core hours' but are otherwise free to work their contracted hours in a pattern which suits them. Employers may introduce staggered hours to some or all of their workforce at a particular site in order to reduce transport demand at peak times. This can ease congestion and make arrival times on site more reliable, which can reduce stress for staff and reduce working time lost due to the late arrival of staff.

Individuals and organisations have reported that flexible working can result in a number of benefits, for example some employees find they are able to balance work and family commitments more easily when working flexibly. For employers this can help with staff retention, which reduces recruitment costs. Some individuals and organisations may experience negative impacts of introducing these measures – for example, the unavailability of some staff for certain meetings.

Barriers to introducing flexible working or staggered hours may include operational pressures, or the reluctance of managers/employers to support flexible working.

Like home and remote working, flexible working and staggered hours can help to reduce congestion, particularly at peak times, resulting in economic benefits. This may also result in environmental benefits, such as air quality improvements.

Q3a & b: Which measures have been implemented in your organisation to support a) flexible working or b) staff working staggered hours?

We would like to hear more about the measures which have been implemented in your workplace in order to support **a) flexible working and b) staff working staggered hours**. These might include particular policies, and might have been introduced for all employees or just for particular teams or departments. Any information about the reasons for encouraging flexible working or working staggered hours would be welcome as would any data about the percentage of staff working flexibly or using staggered hours. Please include as much detail as possible.

Q4a & b: What have been the barriers to supporting a) flexible working and b) staggered hours? Or if they have not been implemented in your organisation, what do you consider are the reasons for this?

Teleconferencing, videoconferencing, web-conferencing

Teleconferencing, videoconferencing and web-conferencing are already used in a number of organisations, and can assist employees and employers in reducing the costs associated with travelling to meetings. Travelling to meetings, plus the staff time involved in travelling to them, can be expensive, particularly when meetings are scheduled to take place abroad or a long way from an employee's place of work, or involve several staff travelling.

Although some meetings may still need to be held face-to-face, holding as many meetings as possible through teleconferencing, videoconferencing and web-conferencing can cut costs and also result in environmental benefits, such as helping to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint. Some individuals and organisations may experience negative impacts of introducing these measures, for example on the closeness of working relationships.

Barriers to implementing these measures might include a lack of available equipment, a lack of skills needed to use these technologies, or cultural resistance to changing working practices.

Q5a, b & c: Which measures have been implemented in your organisation to support a) teleconferencing, b) videoconferencing and/or c) web-conferencing?

We would like to hear more about the measures which have been implemented in your workplace in order to support **a) teleconferencing, b) videoconferencing and/or c) web-conferencing**. Any information about the reasons for encouraging the use of these technologies would be welcome as would any data about the number of tele-/video-/web-conferences held by staff and any training and guidance made available to staff. Please include as much detail as possible.

Q6a, b & c: What have been the barriers to introducing a) teleconferencing, b) videoconferencing, c) web-conferencing? Or if they have not been introduced in your organisation, what do you consider are the reasons for this? You may wish to consider whether any barriers have been technical, financial or cultural, or perhaps a mixture of these and other barriers.

Q7: What have been the impacts of introducing any or all of the following?

- **Home working**
- **Remote working**
- **Flexible working**
- **Staggered hours**
- **Teleconferencing**
- **Videoconferencing**
- **Web-conferencing**

We would like to hear more about the impacts of introducing these measures - have they been positive or negative or a mixture of both? You may find it useful to reference the introductory commentary in the sections above which provide examples of the sorts of impacts that might be observed. As well as economic, environmental and HR impacts, these could also include changes to travel expenditure, requirements for office space and requirements for car parking spaces. You may wish to consider the impacts both for individuals, the organisation or even to wider society. Again, please include as much detail as possible.

Q8: In your opinion, what role or roles, if any, could Government play in encouraging a more widespread uptake of alternatives to travel?

There are a number of reasons why alternatives to travel may not have been more widely implemented. These could include:

- Lack of information – whilst some organisations are using a range of alternatives to travel already, others may lack information about alternatives to travel and the associated benefits.
- Interoperability difficulties – some technologies which facilitate alternatives to travel may not be compatible with other technologies.
- Risk of obsolescence – technology is moving fast in this area, and the risk of equipment becoming obsolete relatively quickly may be a barrier to organisations wishing to invest in this technology.
- Difficulties in quantifying the wider benefits of investing in this area – at present whilst the cost of introducing alternatives to travel is largely borne by individual organisations, the benefits which result from this investment accrue to wider society as well as to the organisation and their employees.
- Lack of infrastructure – for example broadband provision, which can be a major barrier to organisations wishing to introduce alternatives to travel.

You may wish to consider whether you view the issues outlined above as relevant or not, and suggest where and how Government could intervene to tackle these, as well as considering where, in your view, Government intervention would not be appropriate. You may also wish to highlight any additional issues which are not mentioned above and how these could be addressed by Government.

Q9: Are there any other innovations relating to alternatives to travel that your organisation is using or introducing which you think should be considered as part of this Call for Evidence? One example of this could be the use of instant messaging to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings and provide a low-cost, or even free, method of communication for businesses and organisations. Please use this section to highlight any innovative practices relating to alternatives to travel and give details of the reasons for implementing these practices, their impacts and any barriers encountered.

Q10: The Government has a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. In your view what role could alternatives to travel play in ensuring this target is met? Here you may wish to discuss alternatives to travel technologies and/or working practices which you think will or should play a key role in your business in future, or you may even wish to discuss emerging technologies which your organisation is designing or testing, which may become more mainstream in future.

Q11: Is there any potential for, or evidence that, the use of alternatives to travel measures could discriminate directly or indirectly on, or could affect equality of opportunity of the different equalities groups, (eg gender, age, disability, ethnicity and race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, transgender, pregnancy and maternity)

You may wish to consider whether different equalities groups have different needs. For example you may wish to consider the implications for visually impaired or hearing impaired people working from home, could the need for employers to make reasonable adjustments by providing specialist equipment act as a barrier to participation? Could flexible working/staggered hours be particularly beneficial to employees with mobility impairments if the opportunity to travel at less busy times makes their journeys easier? Please use this section to highlight any relevant issues which you consider may impact on one or more of the equalities groups outlined above.

Q12: Are there any physical or social barriers to participation/access to alternatives to travel measures?

5. How to Respond

Instructions

The simplest method of responding to this Call for Evidence is to complete the online questionnaire, which can then be returned to the Department for Transport by email or printed and returned by post. This can be found at www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2011-10/.

Alternatively, you may write to the Department for Transport at the address at the end of this document, citing the question numbers listed below.

If you would like further copies of this consultation document it can be found at www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2011-10/ or you can contact Alison Franks if you would like alternative formats (Braille, audio CD, etc).

Freedom of Information

Information provided in response to this Call for Evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

What Happens Next?

Following the end of the Call for Evidence on 31st May 2011, the Department for Transport will consider all of the questionnaires submitted and representations made during the period, before publishing its response.

This will take the form of a summary of responses accompanied by an explanation of the actions we intend to take next.

Contact Information

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