

Powers in Place briefing



Transport

The Key Takeaway

The powers and funding to develop and oversee an integrated, affordable and reliable public transport network must be devolved to local leaders.

About UK100

UK100 is a network of local leaders who have pledged to lead a rapid transition to Net Zero with Clean Air in their communities ahead of the government's target.



Executive Summary

Powers in Place is a handbook of the powers that local authorities have to deliver Net Zero, and whether they can deploy these powers effectively to create change. The report covers five areas - overarching powers, transport, buildings, energy and waste.

It finds that surface transport has emerged as the largest-emitting sector in the UK since 2015, accounting for 26% of total UK emissions in 2021, and is not on track to meet carbon budgets. Electric cars sales have grown substantially, but there has been little progress in driving a modal shift to public and active transport. Limited options for active travel and lack of public transport is a significant challenge to delivering Net Zero in rural areas.

The absence of powers to develop an integrated transport system in all areas except London has severely restricted local authorities' ability to plan for zero carbon transport. There is a critical need for increasing devolution of transport funding and wider powers to local areas.

Key Recommendations



Devolve the powers for local leaders to develop a London-style integrated, reliable, more affordable, and simpler to use regional public transport network.



Devolve and pool local authority transport funding to provide longer term certainty, with funds allocated in a non-competitive way on the basis of local transport plans.



Reduce the costs of connecting EV charging networks to the grid and include every local and regional authority in designing the charging infrastructure across its area.

Challenges



Funding

- Local and combined authorities often have to bid for funds using the government's WebTAG guidance, which assigns economic value to speeding up traffic, conflicting with the need to reduce carbon and meaning active travel schemes struggle to get funding.
- Deep cuts in funding from 2010-2020, Covid-19 and high inflation has negatively impacted staff resources and capacity, particularly in smaller authorities.



Planning

- Local Authorities lack control and oversight of the whole transport system.
- There is a growing lobby that views any attempt to discourage use of cars as restricting freedom. Parking is seen as an emotive issue and carries political risk.



Rail/Light rail/ metro/ underground

- Local and combined authorities have very few powers over rail services.
- Rapid transit networks must pass stringent Benefit-Cost-Ratios through the WebTAG system, which is often challenging.
- A rapid transit system can take up to 10 years to develop, with the risk of cancellation by the Secretary of State.
- Only bus services regulated by the local authority can be required to connect with rail services.



Buses

- Outside London and Northern Ireland, no authorities retained direct control of all bus services following deregulation.
- Bus operators run services for profit and cut non profitable services. Competitors can't consult on routes or pricing.
- Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was allocated to only 31 of the 79 transport authorities that applied, offering just £1.08 billion of the £10 billion requested.
- Local authorities who rebrand buses or introduce not-for-profit services have threats of litigation from bus operators. Only mayoral combined authorities have the power to directly franchise services.
- Many rural areas have become transport deserts, over 3,000 bus routes were withdrawn between 2010-18, due to insufficient people to make the bus service profitable for operators.



EV charging

- The costs of grid connections in areas with poor infrastructure are prohibitive.
- High electricity prices reduce the attractiveness of EVs for new buyers. Public EV charging costs more than home charging due to greater VAT - making EVs more expensive for people without off-street parking.

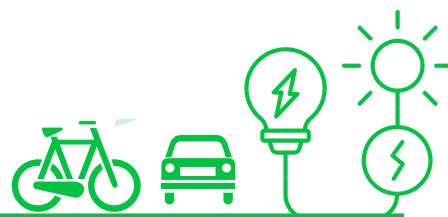


Clean Air Zones (CAZs)

- There is some reluctance to use charging mechanisms due to fear of vocal opposition from some businesses and residents.
- Local authorities cannot enforce CAZs on the National Highways network.



The Manchester Bee Network is a plan to connect every neighbourhood and community in Greater Manchester, making it easier for people to get around on foot or by bike. It includes 1,800 miles of proposed cycling and walking network and 2,400 new and improved road crossings. It is possible because it is funded out of the Mayor of Greater Manchester's Challenge Fund which is devolved funding.



Nottinghamshire County Council was awarded >£1.5 million under the Rural Mobility Fund to provide new demand-responsive transport services to three rural and suburban areas. This is integrated with fixed timetable public transport through timetable coordination and through-ticketing.



[Read Powers in Place](#)

[Read Briefing Notes on Buildings, Energy Infrastructure, Local Powers and Waste](#)

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Relevant Legislation	Power enabled or blocked
Highways Act 1980	Highways improvements including walking and cycling routes
Environment Act 1995	Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA): measures to reduce emissions
Transport Act 2000 Transport Act 2008	Requirement to produce Local Transport Plans (LTP), Transport Authority structures, Clean Air Zones (CAZ)
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 Local Government Act 1985	Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and Experimental TROs – restricting traffic in defined areas To encourage walking and cycling, and manage parking
Traffic Orders Procedure (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020	Emergency procedure for introducing Traffic Regulation Orders, withdrawn in April 2021
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1967	Introducing speed limits e.g. 20mph
Equalities Act 2010	Accessibility requirements affecting pavement furniture including EV charging
Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) Regulations 2002 Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (England) General Regulations 2007	Penalties for vehicles left idling: can be used to support air quality measures Allows local authority to enforce parking regulations, including in EV charging bays, bus stops and cycle lanes
Traffic Management Act 2004	Enforcing moving traffic violations. Guidance added in 2020 regarding support for active travel
Transport Act 1985	Deregulation of buses
Bus Services Act 2017	Potential to franchise bus services, or specify routes through Enhanced Partnerships
Local Government Act 1976	Taxi licencing: can apply to emissions
Air Quality (Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles Database) (England and Wales) Regulations 2019	Collection of data on taxis and private hire vehicles (PHV)
Workplace Parking Levy 2009	Charging for workplace parking
Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013	Procurement
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Ability to place requirements on developers to incorporate or pay for sustainable transport in new developments, including walking and cycling provisions