



South Downs Society

formerly Society of Sussex Downsmen

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

TRANSPORT POLICY

OUR POSITION

The biggest threat to the countryside is climate change, with transport contributing a significant percentage of CO2 emissions. Road and air traffic continue to rise. Both driving and flying offer benefits, but both have damaging environmental effects. New roads and new runways scar the landscape, while speeding traffic and roaring aircraft erode tranquility for people who live near major roads or under flight paths.

Traffic in rural areas moves at speeds which inhibit people from walking, cycling, horse-riding, and enjoying the countryside. The majority of fatal crashes occur on rural roads, and wildlife and farm stock are frequent victims of accidents.

The clutter of road signs and street furniture impairs tranquility and harms local distinctiveness.

Of those who visit the National Park, the great majority travel by car, impairing the character of the countryside. While cars have improved access for many, the rural households without a car have become more isolated, as other transport options have declined and local shops and services have closed down.

The **aim** of transport policy across and around the downs must be to:

- protect and enhance the countryside by reducing the impact of surface and air traffic
- enable people to access the South Downs National Park and ensure that rural communities are able to access services, without compromising its unique environmental and cultural characteristics
- reduce the need to travel throughout the National Park
- encourage the use of low carbon modes as the preferred choice of travel.

Within these broad aims the **guiding principles** of policy should include:

1. Favoring the use of low carbon networks for travel in order to mitigate climate change, and conserve and use energy efficiently.

2. Where practical, development taking place in urban/rural hubs with access to quality public transport.
3. Reducing car dependency by supporting walking, cycling, and public, community and voluntary transport.
4. Making best use of existing infrastructure – roads and car parks, rail, waterways and air services, recognising where the car has an appropriate role and seeking to mitigate its environmental impact.
5. Ensuring that travel costs reflect the environmental and social impacts of transport through fiscal incentives.
6. Protecting local diversity and tranquility through a rural road hierarchy (with speeds of 30mph or less through villages, 40mph on country roads and 20 mph on quiet lanes), unobtrusive signage, road safety schemes that are designed to reflect local character, and lighting that avoids polluting dark skies.
7. Enhancing the public realm in rural settlements and market towns through sensitive maintenance of pavements, street lighting and street furniture that reflects local and historic character, through clear and uncluttered signage and improved links to the countryside of the national park.
8. Maintaining and improving a rights of way network which provides opportunities for access for all and is part of a low carbon transport network.
9. Ensuring that new road building is an option of last resort where:
 - * it is the best solution for, and appropriate in scale to, the problem
 - * it does not lead to traffic growth or undermine public transport use, walking and cycling by making car use more attractive
 - * it is consistent with national and local land use planning policies and national park statutory purposes
 - * it is introduced alongside measures to manage demand for use of the car
 - * it does not generate additional development pressures on the countryside
 - * it does not deprive more environmentally friendly transport initiatives of scarce resources.
10. Ensuring that any new major rail infrastructure (such as reopening of the Lewes – Uckfield line) meets our objectives.
11. Aiding and promoting the retention and viability of local services including shops, surgeries, schools, libraries, post offices and pubs to meet the needs of local communities and reduce miles travelled and consequent carbon emissions.

12. Ensuring that freight impacts are reduced through modal shift from road to rail and water, and appropriate routing of HGVs to prevent damage to country lanes and settlements.

HOW WILL WE HELP TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

1. We will seek to influence transport planning policy through commenting and campaigning on emerging Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans.
2. We will comment on individual schemes for new or improved transport infrastructure including highway maintenance, road safety, parking, speed limits, signage, street lighting and other furniture.
3. We will seek to influence the development management process by commenting on planning applications within and around the national park being determined by the National Park Authority or local authorities, and we will back this up through any appeal process.
4. We will seek to minimize our own use of carbon-based fuels by monitoring and managing our business use of private and public transport and by managing our member and public events and walks with “green transport” aims in mind.
5. We will press for the best practical network of public rights of way and access land in the national park and we will help to publicise and promote this network.