

this month

Another level?



Can we take the coordination of our transport systems to another level in the UK? Or perhaps the question should be: how can we?

All the talk at the recent Intertraffic exhibition in Amsterdam was centred around connected cities and the development of in-car technology. So if the technology is already there, what are we missing in the UK to make sure these brilliant new developments are used to create a safer, more reliable network and to lay the necessary foundations for 'smarter' ways of travelling in the future? Examples of some of the fantastic work across Europe – notably in Stockholm and Copenhagen – clearly illustrate the drivers behind a connected or smart city. One of the main ones is simply to enhance the towns and cities where we live and work, to make them better places to be. Smart cities can mean many things to many people but generally transport always comes pretty high on the agenda when residents are asked why they want to live or work somewhere. So why does it feel that the UK's transport system is so fragmented and uncoordinated compared to some of our European counterparts? Why can't we have all modes of vehicles working alongside each other without too many incidents and why can't we make public transport more attractive for people to use?

At a recent round table debate (see pages 50-51), an attendee argued that the reason why so many people continue to travel by car is that it is often the least worst option rather than the best. Where would you rather be? Sitting in your own car with that little bit of luxury when you are stuck in a delay, or (probably standing) in an unreliable and expensive train carriage?

The point here is that we must improve the coordination of travel in the UK if we ever want to provide better services. It is not always about funding. Why can't we work towards making simple journeys more effective? Why can't we make a guarantee to the travelling public that if you use public transport we will get you from A to B in the quickest, most efficient way? Why can't there always be a bus waiting for you at the train station when you get off the train? There are clearly more questions to answer before we can ever think about coordinating our network. While the sector remains so fragmented and transport organisations so focused on their own agendas rather than the bigger picture, we can never tick these achievements off the list. It can be done. London has come a significant way and Manchester is a good example of what can be achieved if someone takes the lead. Who is going to take up the challenge? Or will we still be posing these questions in another 10 years time?

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