Employer attitudes to sustainable transport initiatives: Perceptions of senior managers in North Bristol

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Overview

• Research context: the Local Sustainable Transport Fund case study
• Research participants and methodology
• Research findings: interviews with senior managers
• Conclusions
The LSTF Strategic Employment Sites Case Study

Evaluating the impact of sustainable transport measures on strategic employment sites and business parks (2014-16)

• Commissioned by the Department for Transport
• Partners:
  • Hertfordshire County Council (lead)
  • University of Hertfordshire
  • West of England Local Authorities
  • UWE
  • SusCom and SevernNet
  • Slough Borough Council; Atkins Global Consultants
Motivations for the research

• Economic growth is a primary objective of the LSTF programme
• Little reported evidence of the impact of demand management measures on business activity
• ‘Strategic employment sites’ employ large number of workers but non-car access is not always easy
• These sites are under-researched compared to urban centres
• Business decisions are influenced by personal/corporate perceptions
Case study research aims

Seek evidence on:

• the impact of sustainable transport measures have on **commuting modal share** in the selected areas

• The impact of sustainable transport measures on **business performance** in the selected areas
Case study locations: West of England

Portbury, Avonmouth and Severnside ('Portside')

Photo: Bristol Port Company

The Bristol ‘North Fringe’

Photo: Aga Szewczyk
## Participating Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Portside</th>
<th>North Fringe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of businesses</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of employees</td>
<td>1,876</td>
<td>33,702</td>
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<td>Economic sectors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>IT &amp; Communications</td>
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<td>Energy</td>
<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Recycling &amp; waste</td>
<td>Business &amp; financial services</td>
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<td>Government</td>
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Methodology applied in WoE

Recruitment of businesses

- Senior manager interviews (2014)
- Site cordon counts (2014)
- Employee travel survey (2014)

Early LSTF

- Employee travel survey (2014)

Post-LSTF

- Senior manager interviews (2016)
- Site cordon counts (2016)
- Employee travel survey (2016)

Commuter panel

- Bus user surveys (2014)
- Bus user surveys (2015)
Mode of travel to work today: 2014 survey

- Car (alone)
- Car share
- Motorbike/scooter
- Cycle
- Walk
- Bus/coach
- Employer bus/coach
- Train
- Work from home
- Other
Senior Manager interviews: research aims

To explore perceptions of sustainable transport within the context of wider transport issues affecting their business:

- The relative importance of transport compared with other business concerns
- Identification of specific transport issues relevant to the business
- Commuter transport issues and any impact they might have on the business
- Awareness of, and views about, LTSF and related interventions
## Interviewees

Examples from the 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Interviewee/s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airbus</td>
<td>Vice President, Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atkins</td>
<td>Managing Director, Atkins Communications</td>
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<td>Babcock International Group</td>
<td>Managing Director, Infrastructure</td>
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<td>Candle Products Company</td>
<td>Human Resources Director</td>
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<td>Energy Technology Company</td>
<td>Finance Director</td>
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<td>NHS Trust</td>
<td>Director of Facilities</td>
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<td>Travel and Parking Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisbets plc</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engagement Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seabank Power Station</td>
<td>Production Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Park</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Company</td>
<td>Vice President and Director</td>
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<td>University of the West of England</td>
<td>Deputy Vice Chancellor, Operations</td>
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Findings – senior manager interviews

Transport Needs

Commuting
Transport Infrastructure and management
Operations

Business Performance

Staffing issues
Expansion plans
CSR
Business costs & orders

Influencing Factors

Sector and employment type
Working patterns
Site characteristics
Location
Assessment of local transport infrastructure

How would you rate the North Fringe/Portside with respect to the following aspects of transport?

- Access to the motorway network
- Access to the local road network
- Public transport links for staff
- Public transport links for business travel
- Availability of parking
- Range of bus links available for your staff
- Frequency of buses for your staff
- Convenience of bus stops for your business
- Safe cycling routes for staff
- Pedestrian access

[Bar chart showing ratings for each aspect, with categories from 'Very poor' to 'Very good']

Portside
North Fringe
The importance of transport issues

“Well they’re right up there with the top issues for a range of reasons really….. Business efficiency - that’s important to us and an absolutely crucial question for us is the ability to attract and retain the right people and talent. The ease of getting to work and getting out to clients is critical in that.

Also we have a corporate responsibility policy which puts sustainability right at the top of our agenda”.

Managing Director, Atkins
Business operations

- Freight and logistics
- Business travel

- Staff travel to collaborating organisations within the area (‘agglomeration effects’)
- Shuttle buses, pool cars and bicycles for business travel
Business operations

• Corporate social responsibility

“In terms of impacting on the actual day to day operations of the business I would suggest it’s probably limited in terms of changing the shape of the business model, but it’s probably material in terms of having some impact on the sustainability or the environmental impact of the business.”

Director, Technology Consultancy
Commuting and staff satisfaction

“If the transport connections and the cycle ways were more developed, easier to use, more integrated, the ease of getting to and from work actually helps people’s satisfaction of going to and from work rather than having a real struggle. So I think if it could be smoothed out and improved, it would help. Would it change fundamentally our business? No, I don't think so.”

Vice President, Airbus
Commuting and staff recruitment

“We are trying to recruit a specific type of person, often there might be only one or two people who’ve got the skills we want, therefore you need to make it as attractive as possible, and that’s why we ended up here. There wasn’t a great deal of competition in terms of cycle facilities and alternate transport facilities.”

Finance Director, Emerson’s Green
Commuting and staff recruitment

“Effectively we are deliberately discriminating against anybody that hasn’t got their own transport to get to work and when we instruct an agency to find people for us we would state that the person will have to have their own transport.”

HR Director, Avonmouth
Working patterns and the commute

• Flexible working allowed where possible so staff can avoid peak times (especially North Fringe)

• But shift workers not afforded flexibility

• Working at home encouraged by some, but not all:

  “But we don’t promote working from home as a whole because the engineers need to collaborate”

  Manager, Technology Company
Parking demand and business expansion

- Better provision of sustainable transport is an essential component of reducing car parking demand.
- On-site parking was close to, or had already reached, full capacity for several employers.
- Parking in residential streets seen as bad for community relations.
Views on LSTF and business networks: North Fringe

• “I think it’s quite exciting to see what the whole thing has to offer really in the area with the transport fund… it’s positive and it’s how everyone comes together to benefit the economy, I think that’s where it’s going to really get the tangible benefits.” (Manager, Business Park)

• “I think employers have a duty to step up to the basic steps each time that are put in, and then if you have further LSTF or whatever funds there may be, they then build on that and actually take people to the next level (....) There should be peer pressure and peer assistance between organisations to do that.” (Manager, NHS Trust)
“What about Avonmouth? People have got bikes and lots of people live round here. This area is all about lack of infrastructure. I appreciate we’ve got to work with the Council to the betterment of us all, really. I mean, not just selfishly these bits and the people who work here, but everybody in Avonmouth. This is our community and, you know I’m proud to be here.”

(Managing Director, Nisbets)
Conclusions – senior manager interviews

**Transport Needs**

- Commuting

**Business Performance**

- Staffing issues
- Expansion plans
- CSR
- Business costs & orders

**Influencing Factors**

- Sector & employment type
- Working patterns
- Location
- Site characteristics
Conclusions

• Ports area

Poor non-car alternatives to access employment sites perceived as a serious impediment to recruitment by some employers.

Better sustainable transport infrastructure and general road improvements needed to improve image and achieve employment growth.
Conclusions

• North Fringe concerns about:
  – the potential over-burdening of the transport network as a consequence of new housing developments
  – potential limits to expanding their business in the area
  – Smarter choice measures needed alongside improvement to sustainable transport infrastructure
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