

Response to Transport for the South East's Transport Strategy for the South East

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum does not believe that the proposed Transport Strategy will help the residents of the town. The town already suffers from chronic congestion, which the proposals will not change, in either the short or the long term. The strategy should be replaced with one which focusses on short journeys and which puts climate emergency at its heart.

In particular, the strategy does not address the need to radically transform the way that we move people and goods into and within Royal Tunbridge Wells. The policy of the Town Forum is to put people and the environment first, ahead of the supposed need for continued growth, and that requires a fundamentally different strategic approach.

The proposals continue previous strategies which have led to high levels of pollution and congestion. For Royal Tunbridge Wells, 'connecting communities' means primarily connections across very short distances within the town – up to 3 miles – or relatively short distances into or out of town. In total 2/3 of journeys are less than 5 miles and it is these journeys that we should focus on first. Once those have been optimised, longer journeys will automatically become easier.

Of particular concern to the residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells is the lack of policies to combat pollution and congestion and the consequent negative impacts on ill-health and quality of life in general. The focus for the town needs to be on active travel for short journeys and sustainable travel for longer journeys. The town was not built for motor vehicles and cannot be adapted to be so without major disruption and cost.

There are good pointers in the strategy:

- need for joined-up thinking and planning at a regional level;
- emphasis on people and places rather than cars; and
- desire to replace the 'predict and provide' with determining the acceptable level and mode of travel.

However, the strategy then fails to identify actual projects to implement such principles and relies instead on the old-fashioned approach – building more roads to speed up motor vehicles.

TfSE has a responsibility to lead the county councils in prioritising sustainable solutions, particularly walking, cycling and public transport. The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum has developed detailed proposals for such sustainable solutions and would be glad to share those with TfSE. We urge you not to miss this opportunity to change the current unsustainable approach to transport in the South East

Adrian Berendt
Chair, on behalf of RTW Town Forum – January 2020

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); Don Sloan (Deputy Chair); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); TBC (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); Marianne MacDonald (Wellbeing) Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)