

BTA Manifesto

A Roadmap to Change



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01

About the BTA

The BTA is the representative body for the UK business travel industry and Travel Management Companies (TMCs). BTA member TMCs account for over 90% of all business travel booked in the UK.

Our members and partners represent the entirety of the business travel sector ranging from TMCs, airlines, railway operators, car rental companies, hotels, technology providers and financial solution organisations.



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Welcome from Clive



Dear Reader,

It goes without saying that the last few years have been challenging for our sector. Our members and partners have worked tirelessly in unprecedented and uncertain conditions, whilst for so long it remained unclear what the long-term impact of the pandemic would be on the future of business travel.

For a long time, we wondered whether video calls would permanently replace the need to meet in person and whether travelling for work would be a thing of the past. We wondered whether demand would ever return to pre-pandemic levels and what the long-term impact would be for the many people who have chosen to make travel their livelihood.

Whilst undoubtedly there have been changes to the way we live and work, we can now be confident that there remains a strong demand for business travel and meeting face-to-face remains integral for developing strong relationships and building trust.

Crucially, business travel continues to extend beyond the boardroom, business travellers are also construction workers, musicians and charity workers, all of which rely on our members and partners to travel safely and efficiently.

I am so proud of our sector and the resilience it has shown. Now we must look to the future and continue to champion the needs of the business travel sector in Westminster and Whitehall.

This document is a business traveller's manifesto, setting out what the sector is calling for to help ensure travelling for business is as smooth and seamless as possible and to help ensure that our member TMCs have the recognition they deserve.

If I have learnt anything since becoming CEO of the BTA it is that we can't be certain what challenges may lay ahead, but what I do know is that the BTA will continue to work hard on behalf of our members and partners to champion the needs of our sector.

Best wishes,

Clive Wratten

CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Wratten', written in a cursive style.

To support the future of business travel we are therefore calling for:

Trade agreements to include new work visas and permits to encourage business travel

A long-term workforce strategy

An industry standard for carbon off-setting for the entire business travel journey

A new UK Global Business Travel fund

A strategic multi-modal transport strategy which covers the entirety of the United Kingdom

Rail ticketing reforms to benefit the business traveller

Prioritise delivery of rail infrastructure and key business routes

Support for the growth of the SAF production sector in the UK

Freeze Air Passenger Duty (APD)

Investment and support for our regional airports

A commitment to invest in electric vehicle infrastructure



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The Importance of Business Travel

Business travel plays a vital role in the UK economy, contributing £27.7bn per annum to UK GVA and supporting over 280,000 jobs. Business travellers are also the lifeblood to both airlines and railways.

For airlines, business travellers account for 15-20% of their customer base, and on certain routes are twice as profitable as leisure travellers. On our railways, business travellers provide over £1bn of revenue at a yield 6x more than the average traveller.

Ensuring people can travel sustainably and effortlessly for work no matter where they live is crucial for delivering economic growth to all areas of the UK.

Contrary to popular opinion, business travellers are not just people in suits, they could be musicians, aid workers, teachers or journalists. Equally people travel for business for a wide range of reasons, business travellers may be going to a meeting or an overseas conference, they may be closing a business deal or performing a concert for an audience.

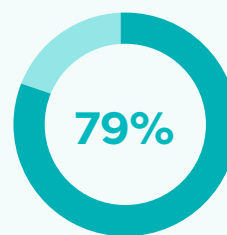
Given the wide range of reasons someone may travel for business, a business trip could be anywhere from a few hours to days or weeks.

The needs of a business traveller therefore differ from those of a leisure traveller. A business traveller heavily relies on a trip running to time – they may have organised several meetings to happen on the same day, or they may have a music performance booked for the following evening at a different location or they may need to get to a country urgently to deliver much needed humanitarian aid.

A trip being delayed is not only an inconvenience, but it has a significant economic cost.

Whilst the pandemic has changed the way we live and work, the demand for business trips remains strong. Business travellers are, however, more likely to schedule less trips than before but they now travel for longer and go further to ensure that each trip makes economic and business sense.

According to our research with CBI Economics, the increase in video calls and working from home has not reduced the appetite for in-person meetings. In fact, our data has shown that:



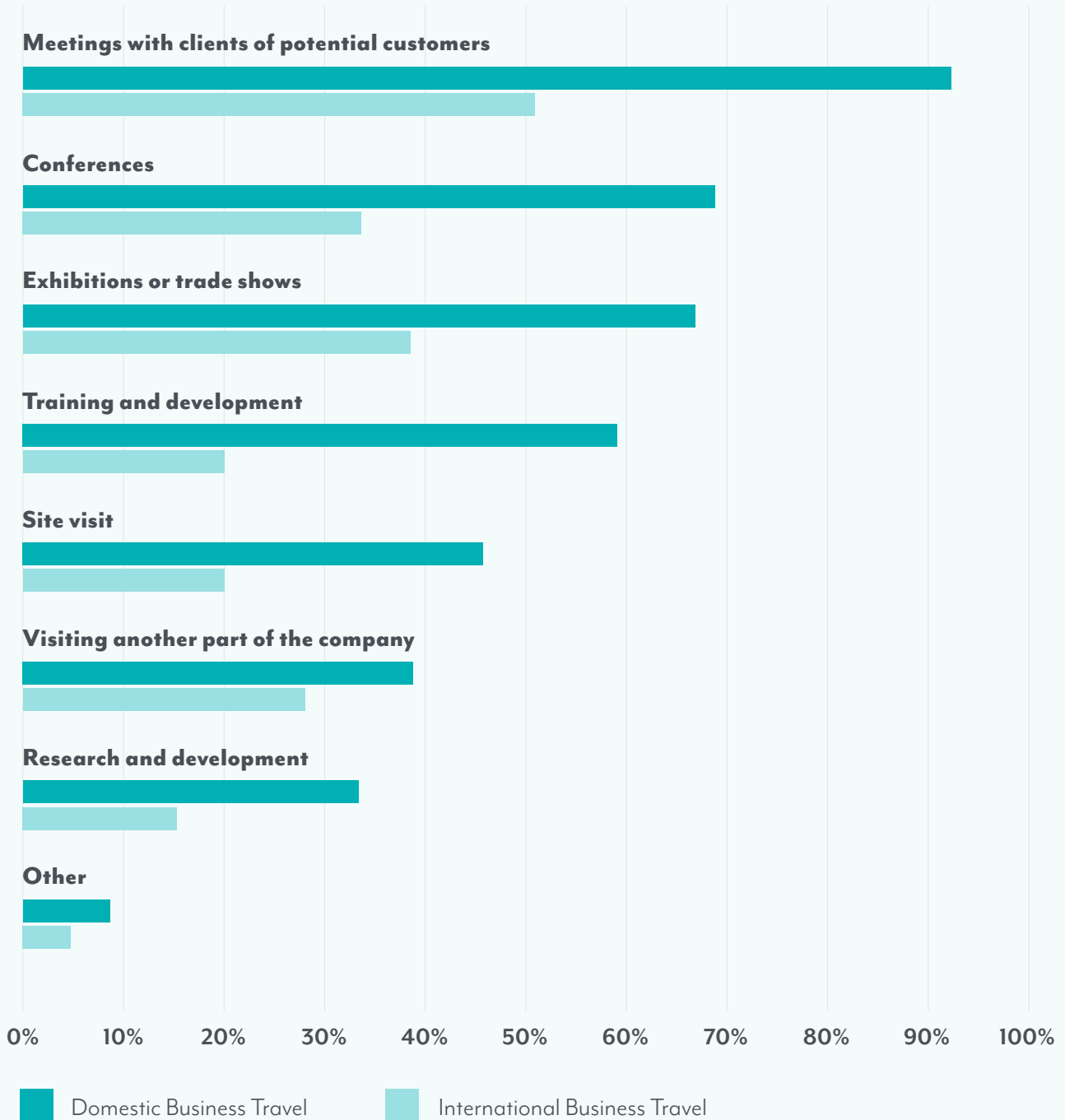
of businesses stated in person meetings as their preference compared to virtual meetings



The vast majority of businesses agreed that in person meetings are more effective than virtual meetings for teamwork, employee wellbeing and innovation

Reasons for Business Travel

(% of business travellers)



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Who is a Business Traveller?

Business travellers can be CEOs of large multinational companies, but they can also be teachers, doctors, aid workers and engineers.

Due to their critical nature, many of these professions gained travel exemptions during the pandemic as the need to be able to travel for work remained crucial for the economy.

Examples of business travellers



Construction worker



Doctor



Lawyer



Athlete



Lorry driver



Journalist



Teacher



Photographer



Shop worker



Engineers



Travel blogger



CEO



Aid worker



Musician

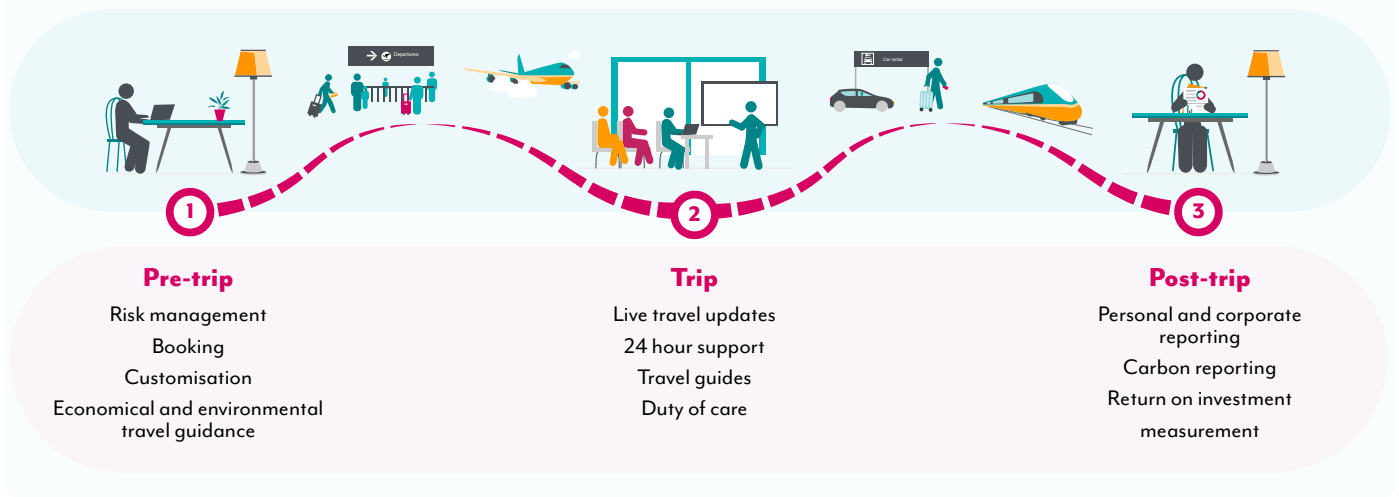


Banker

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Travel Management Companies (TMCs)

The Role of a TMC



The role of a TMC is to ensure that a business traveller has a successful journey and trips run as smoothly as possible.

TMCs are agencies that manage and simplify the experience, from processing bookings, adhering to company policies, expense management and reporting.

TMCs manage 99% of FTSE 250 companies, SMEs and central government teams to meet and undertake business activity that supports the UK economy.

They play an integral role in the transport eco-system particularly by:

- Aggregating volumes across customers, translating into lower fares from suppliers
- Providing visibility and control of travel costs e.g., via comprehensive reporting

- Ensuring travellers are supported in managing a complex and volatile travel landscape e.g., in the event of disruption or natural disaster
- Providing travel management expertise e.g., in travel risk management and travel sustainability
- TMCs are an essential distribution channel for the travel supplier eco-system, helping to drive modal shift, knowledge and behaviour change.
- TMCs have an important role to play in making business journeys less carbon intensive, they consult with corporates on greener travel programmes, they offer greener travel options at the point of sale, they measure and track a corporates sustainable travel choices and they report on and analyse corporate travel sustainable

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What can we expect to see in 2024?

“While there are some potential risks that could impact demand for business travel in 2024, such as a global recession or a new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the outlook for 2024 is positive. We should see business travel recover to 80-85% of 2019 levels.”

TMC Member on Demand

“Through collaboration and partnership, a concerted focus is needed towards adopting more sustainable global practices and recognition that the entire industry must work together to make a meaningful impact. There are plenty of opportunities for this including providing CO2 emissions information at the point of booking, offering more rail content through API connections and goal tracking and predictive analytics modelling to our clients on their potential travel footprints.”

TMC Member on Sustainability

“The introduction of artificial intelligence appears to pose a major technological impact on business travel in 2024, as it quickly becomes an enabler for corporate travellers to receive instant support and servicing for simple tasks. We may see AI being used to: personalize the business travel experience for individual travellers, predict and prevent travel disruptions and automate tasks such as travel booking and expense reporting.”

TMC Member on Technology

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Our Recommendations

Future Workforce:

International Trade Agreements

We're calling for: International trade agreements to greater reflect the needs of people travelling internationally for work, including work visas and permits.

Why: As we negotiate trade deals across the world it remains vital to ensure that the UK remains able to attract businesses and workers to invest. One element of this is how easy it is to travel and work in the UK.

How: As we continue to negotiate new trade agreements with our key trading partners, the BTA are calling for a greater emphasis to be placed on new work visas and permits which help to ensure seamless and smooth travel between our key trading partners. We would like to see this help encourage workers to travel overseas for work.

This includes looking to make it easier for UK business travellers to travel within Europe by renegotiating the 90/180-day rule and the requirement for visas for certain destinations, helping to make business trips less complicated and time consuming.

Since the pandemic we have seen an increase in Digital Nomad Visas which allow people to easily work remotely for work. These visas offer innovative ways to attract workers to live and work abroad. We would like to see international trade agreements include new innovative measures to further make it easy to travel for business.

Workforce Strategy

We're calling for: A long-term workforce strategy which identifies the skills needed for a strong travel sector, including greater recognition for the business travel sector and what is needed to help plug the skills gap.

Why: Like many sectors, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the business travel workforce. During the pandemic, the travel sector was forced to scale-back its workforce but since the recovery and return to business travel, many members are struggling to recruit the talent needed to service this demand.

In response to this the BTA have played their role by creating a new Generation BTA Advisory Board to help inspire and engage the next generation of leaders in the business travel sector.

How: We would like to see a long-term workforce strategy which identifies the future skills which will be needed in the economy. Alternative routes into the travel sector such as the Level 3 Travel Consultant apprenticeship ought to be promoted and it remains essential that these qualifications teach the skills needed to keep up with the pace of technological change we are currently witnessing in the sector.

complexity for the consumer and risks undermining fair competition in the market.

The absence of standardised measurement and regulation of carbon offsetting practices also prevents collaboration across industries and impacts the ability to work together to help reduce the impact of global warming.

How: Government should work with our sector to create a carbon off-setting standard which applies to the entire transport sector.

Travelling Sustainably:

Carbon Off-setting

We're calling for: An industry standard for carbon off-setting for the entire business travel journey.

Why: Carbon offsetting is an environmentally friendly alternative to achieving net-zero emissions in cases where companies are unable to reduce their carbon outputs. An industry standard for carbon off-setting is needed to reduce 'greenwashing' and ensure all businesses are being held to the same standards.

Currently there is no agreed standard for carbon off-setting schemes, meaning that different airlines and operators are operating to different standards. This creates greater

Promoting Business Travel:

Promoting Business Travel

We're calling for: The creation of a new UK Global Business Travel fund.

Why: Ensuring international travel is as flexible and efficient as possible is essential for business travel. Business travellers are the drivers of international trade, representing the UK on a global stage. Business travel should therefore be recognised for its crucial role in the UK economy, and more could be done to encourage people to travel for business to our key trading destinations.

Currently SMEs are able to benefit from the DIT Internationalisation Fund which provides grants to support business travel for reasons such as market research, consultancy, independent market visits and trade fairs.

How: Businesses are able to benefit from grants of between £1,000 and £9,000.

However, it is currently unclear whether this fund will continue following the UK's departure from the European Union.

According to the International Fund Administrator, Capita, around 200 SMEs apply for this fund each month including many of our SME customers.

We are therefore calling for access to this fund to continue. Alternatively, we would like to see it replaced with a UK Global Business Travel fund. If implemented, this fund could be coordinated as part of our signing of new Free Trade Agreements, encouraging SMEs to travel to new trading partners, unlocking new business deals in key industries across the world.

local district creating their own plans for transport connectivity, there is no overall consistency in how easy it is to travel for business.

An overarching strategic transport plan which better aligns different modes of transport is crucial for business travellers. When travelling for business you are likely to use many modes of transport for a single trip, you may drive to the railway station, then travel by train to your closest airport for an overseas or domestic trip or need to get a bus on the other side.

In order to have a successful trip all of these modes of transport need to align. This requires strategic transport planning which takes in the views of all types of people who use public transport, this includes people who travel for leisure purposes, commuters and also crucially business travellers.

How: We would like to see a new overarching strategic transport plan created by central Government which aligns all modes of transport from car, rail, bus, light rail and aviation and plans for different travellers in mind. By having a strategic transport plan we could ensure for example, that a business traveller in the East Midlands could travel easily and sustainably to the nearest airport by train, or a business traveller landing in Bristol or Manchester can easily travel the city centre for a meeting. Often areas outside of our major cities have no direct connection by rail to local airports and are forced therefore to travel by car.

This plan should build on the proposals announced with Network North to create an entire transport network plan for the whole of Great Britain.

Transport Infrastructure:

Transport Strategy

A joined-up, multi-modal transport system which connects our villages, towns and cities to major economic hubs is crucial for facilitating business travel for workers across the UK. This is because travelling for work relies on being able to get from A to B in a quick and efficient way, with every minute of delay often costing businesses money and time.

We're calling for: A strategic transport plan which covers the entirety of the United Kingdom.

Why: Currently we find that, due to the nature of how transport planning currently takes place - with every region or

Rail:

Rail Reforms

We're calling for: Rail ticketing reforms to benefit the business traveller.

The BTA will continue to champion rail ticketing reforms to ensure the booking process and the costs of travel meet the needs of business travellers.

Why: Whilst rail remains a popular mode of travel for business travellers, levels have not reached what they were pre-pandemic. This is partly due to the cost of travelling and the complicated nature of the current ticketing process. More needs to be done to ensure the rail system works for the everyday worker travelling for business.

How: We have consistently heard from members that current ticketing options are overly complicated, we would therefore like to see the number of ticket types on offer reduced. The BTA are calling for the simplification of the rail ticketing options on offer. Most importantly, definitions of peak and off peak need to be consistent and agile enough to respond to industry and public demands.

Rail Infrastructure

We're calling for: The prioritisation of rail infrastructure and key business routes.

Why: Investment in our transport infrastructure remains key in order to ensure a joined-up transport system across the entirety of the business travel journey. Investment in rail is key to unlocking growth, particularly for rural areas who rely on rail to reach major cities.

Investment in our rail infrastructure is fundamental to sustainable business travel, taking more people out of their cars and off the roads and onto trains.

The BTA has been a long-term champion of the need to deliver HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full. Since the Government announced that it will not go ahead with the full delivery of HS2, it now remains vital that the Government ensures that the HS2 line from Birmingham to Euston goes all the way to Euston, even if private funding cannot be secured.

How: We are calling for the prioritisation of rail infrastructure and key business routes, including HS2 and Network North. We would like to see Network North deliver on better connectivity, not only between our major Northern hubs, but also our smaller towns where transport connections often make travelling for business time consuming and difficult. We also need this investment urgently and we remain concerned about the lack of detailed timescales attached to these projects.

We are therefore calling for a detailed timeline for the delivery of Network North and that projects which promote business travel and economic growth are prioritised.

Aviation:

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)

We're calling for: A watertight SAF mandate, alongside grants for developers to boost production and offer subsidies to those purchasing and using SAF in greater quantities.

Why: It is of paramount importance that the business travel industry and governments worldwide work together to ensure SAF becomes the first choice over fossil fuels. A future transport strategy must consider the sustainability of different modes of transport and how these can be improved with investment.

The BTA recognises the crucial importance of SAF and its role in reducing carbon emissions caused by flying. We would like to see Government offer financial incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies or grants to airlines and industry more widely to encourage the investment and deployment of SAF across the industry and help ensure it's an economically viable greener alternative for airlines without penalising travellers.

How: We would like to see the UK Government implement a watertight SAF mandate, provide grants for developers to boost production and offer subsidies to those purchasing and using SAF in greater quantities to avoid these costs being passed down to consumers.

Air Passenger Duty

We're calling for: Air Passenger Duty (APD) to be frozen or cut, and the proceeds of APD to be used to support green projects like SAF.

Why: As an island nation, the UK is heavily dependent upon air travel to maintain its global connectivity, with over 70% of visits to the UK by air. The UK's APD is the highest European aviation tax for short- and long-haul flights.

APD is damaging both economic growth and job creation, and hampering the UK's efforts to establish new trade links. Research by PwC has found that significantly reducing, or abolishing, APD would create tens of thousands of new jobs, and that such a move would actually increase the revenues to the Treasury from other taxes so much that it would pay for itself.

We also believe that the introduction of the new ultra-long-haul classification for Air Passenger Duty (APD) unfairly impacts business travellers, affecting crucial international trade routes to Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia.

How: We urge the Government to review APD levels and commit to, at the very least, freezing it. We would ultimately like to see APD reduced in the coming years. We also recommend that travel in premium economy – a popular option for many business travellers – should not be taxed in the same band as first and business class travel.

As the ultra-long-haul classification was introduced under the rationale of supporting

sustainability, we would also like to see at least 75% of APD from ultra-long-haul flights be ring-fenced for funding green projects, such as the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

Regional Airports

We're calling for: Investment in our regional airports to help deliver growth across the country.

Why: Regional airports help to connect cities and towns from across the UK, particularly for business travellers in areas which may be far from major international airports like Heathrow or Gatwick. By investing in our regional airports we reduce the need for long-distance travel to reach major airports and provide business travellers with the ability to travel by air no matter where they live.

Regional airports also provide economic growth opportunities for the local areas where they are based including jobs, attract businesses and facilitate trade.

How: When establishing investment in transport infrastructure it is key that the entirety of the transport system is considered. People should be able to travel easily for business no matter where in the UK they are based. This would require a review of public service obligations (PSOs) to ensure that connectivity is guaranteed between all key regions of the UK, helping to bring economic stability and growth to regional economies. We also need to see connectivity between our regional airports with local rail and road networks, helping

to ensure the seamless travel experience for business travellers.

Road:

Electric Vehicles

The BTA welcomes the shift to electric vehicles but we need to see greater investment in charging infrastructure.

We're calling for: Greater investment in tackling some of the existing challenges facing EVs at the moment. This includes the accessibility of EV charging points as well as the speed and simplicity of charging an EV.

Why: Whilst public transport is key to unlocking growth, many workers, particularly in rural areas, rely on private cars as their main mode of transport for work. Therefore, in any future transport policy travelling by car should not be forgotten.

We welcome the shift to electric vehicles but we need to see greater investment in charging infrastructure. This is particularly crucial for people using EVs for travelling for work, as business travellers do not have time to spend queuing for an EV point to become available or wait for their cars to charge. Greater investment in EV infrastructure will help workers to make more sustainable choices on how they travel for work or for business.

by the Government on how the charging infrastructure will be ready to facilitate this.

The BTA also welcomes the Government's existing target of 300,000 charging points by 2030 but we want to see further information on where geographically these charging points will be allocated particularly to fit in with other transport plans including Network North.

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