

The DISTILLATE Guide to Cross-sectoral and Intra-organisational Partnership Working for Sustainable Transport Decision Making



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With thanks to: Tony May at ITS, Leeds;
Neil Paulley and Charlotte Brannigan at TRL;
and Paul Rosen and Carolyn Snell at SEI, York
for their input and comments

Final draft - 14th March 2008

Chapter 1: Introduction

This guide is one of the tools supplied by DISTILLATE to help local authority practitioners. The function of this guide is to help practitioners overcome the barriers – identified by practitioners themselves through the DISTILLATE research process – to meaningful partnership working and delivery.

In this context, the DISTILLATE project seeks to develop, through a focused, interdisciplinary research programme, ways of overcoming the barriers to the effective development and delivery of sustainable urban transport and land use strategies and, through them, enhanced quality of life. A survey of the DISTILLATE authority partners identified some key barriers including "divided responsibilities" and "different stakeholder procedures" and these could be experienced within a discipline or department or across the authority (Hull and Tricker, 2005). A follow-up series of interviews was conducted which found that there was an increasing need for cross-sectoral working (Hull, Tricker & Hills, 2006).

A great deal of the work involved in the planning and delivery of transport policy involves partnering with other individuals in the same organisation and/or with other organisations, often in quite complex arrangements. The success of such intra- or cross-organisational working depends on the management not just of the technical side of the project partnership but also of the partnership itself. How the partnership is constituted, the quality of the relationship among the partners, who takes the lead on different aspects and how the partners engage with each other can all affect how well the aim is delivered.

If you are new to partnership working then you should work through this guide and use each of the decision trees in it. If you are trying to troubleshoot an existing partnership working process than it is probably best to initially orientate yourself through the same process of working through the guide from the beginning and try and identify the point at which you could have made a more apposite choice. An important point is that there is no 'right way' to work in partnership: you need to determine which way is right for you in your circumstances and this guide will seek to help you do that. You will see from the case examples later in this guide that there is a continuum of approaches to good partnership working ranging from a 'hands-off' approach to a very 'hands-on' approach, from helping and facilitating others to deliver to being actively involved in roundtable activity oneself: what we have also found is that each example could probably be made even better! Notwithstanding, both ends of the continuum can work in the right circumstances, and both can deliver an impact on policy and actions so one important phase is matching the approach to the circumstance: the choice is yours but experience tells us that to be successful you need to understand what it is you are doing and why you are doing things that way – hence this guide to help you attain that understanding.

This guide examines success factors for partnership work through presentation of data from the literature and from looking at cases. The case examples are drawn in the main from DISTILLATE partners but the guide presents real-life case examples from DISTILLATE and wider afield. Close collaborative working practices between different bodies such as PTE (Passenger Transport Executives), local authorities, developers, URCs (urban regeneration companies), transport providers and other agencies responsible for the implementation of transport policy measures have been a key feature in these cases. We have several cross project case examples that can show useful issues and principles, in particular:

- Trust (based upon mutual understanding – necessary for meaningful option generation, appraisal, and evaluation [including indicators]). This encompasses trust in the process, trust in governance, ownership of the process, and ownership of delivery.
- 'Power sharing': it may also be important to relinquish power over an area in order to get the job done successfully – also building in the structural freedom to transfer/translate mandates to suit competencies and opportunity, and capacity building for this within the partnership.
- Policy Impact: is the right knowledge influencing policy? And are those policies having the desired effect? This is an important area where we need to highlight the fact that transport is often undersold in senior policy arenas. In order to get things done, this requires (at certain levels in the policy cycle – see below) the input of senior officials. Importantly, matching the cross-sectoral level of working with the appropriate policy level in order to develop trust and power capacity at all levels can be the way to deliver an appropriate and timely policy impact.

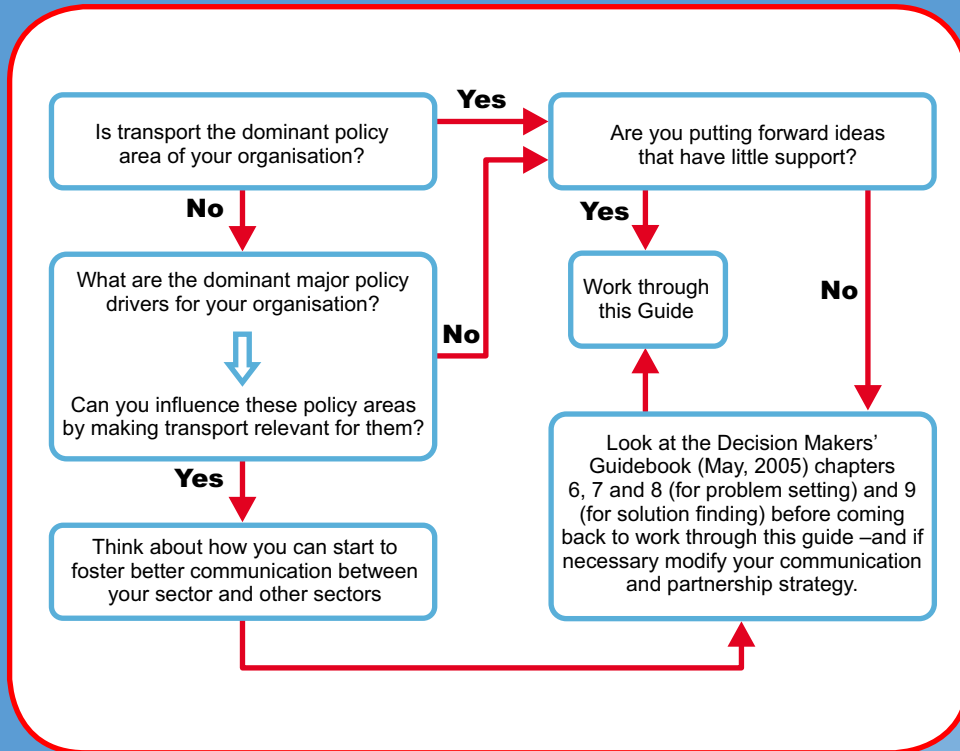
These cases and the literature on partnership working have been examined to determine firstly what factors help ensure that partnerships work well and achieve their objectives, and secondly how barriers that can lead to a partnership experiencing problems and potential failure have been overcome. Many of the suggestions in this guide have been tested with DISTILLATE partners and the wider transport practitioner community at TPM (the Transport Practitioners' Meeting), Manchester, 2007. Thus, we are confident that this DISTILLATE guide is relevant and appropriate to the transport practitioner community.

This guide should, therefore, help you to overcome the organisational and institutional barriers to partnership working and uses. The guide is not designed to be read through from cover to cover but to be selectively used. However, if you are unfamiliar with this territory you may wish to read it through once before using it. The guide contains three substantive sections which are:

- Chapter 2 – Options for partnership working: this section works through five options or approaches to partnership working.
- Chapter 3 – Factors which can help achieve success in intra and inter-organisational cross-sector working.
- Chapter 4 – Explores some Case examples of partnership working and explores key issues coming from them.



If you are embarking on partnership working for the first time, or are unsure of why you might want it, we suggest that you start with the following decision tree.



Decision Tree Number 1: Where to start

The contexts within which local authority partnerships work

Earlier, scoping research within DISTILLATE focussed work on three main barriers to delivery: effective collaborative working within the organisation (usually a local authority); effective collaborative working with partners outside the organisation; and more effective use of high-quality data and information on impacts of actions. All of these barriers can be addressed in one way or another by high-quality 'partnerships' which usually require some form of cross-sectoral working. Other tools are offered within DISTILLATE which address the mechanics of these policy stages. This guide aims to help understand how the partnerships themselves work.

For the purposes of this guide, it is necessary to introduce some background concepts to help us understand the social and political structures within which partnerships can work. Also it is necessary to distinguish between what is participation of others in 'your' process and what is a partnership.

Even within local authorities, one problem for partnership working can often be that individuals have different agendas and different sectoral interests. This section looks at social issues such as 'ownership' of policy arenas and 'belonging' to different policy cycles with all the concomitant differences in social organisation, practice and terminology used that these bring. This section seeks to locate the transport planner at the centre of a wider milieu: it is important to recognise that strategies and goals are derived from this wider milieu, as well as a sense of what should be done and what can be done. In other words, what can be done in terms of transport planning (i.e. what is technically feasible) may not be possible in terms of what can be done politically (or what is politically expedient) or what should be done to bring benefit to other sectors in terms of delivery of more sustainable outcomes. Thus, as a very start, you need to communicate well across the sectors. The impetus to cross-sectoral partnership working can and should come out of a common understanding across the sectors. However, in the real world the practical need for partnership working may well precede that understanding so you need to start working in partnership and build up trust, communication and understanding as you go along.

For local governance, Figure 1 shows a fairly standard representation of the 'policy cycle'. At the 'lowest' (i.e. most local) level is the local level policy cycle with local policies and strategies being formulated, translated into policy measures, implemented, and evaluated. This is the standard policy cycle, stages may be added but these four stages always exist in some form or other.

It is important to remember that the local transport policy cycle is only one of a number of policy cycles at the local level; local authorities have sectoral responsibilities in many different areas such as education, health, environment and economic development. Further, as with the transport policy cycle, each of these is replicated at national and again at European levels. The background paper (January 2007) for the preparation of the current EC Green Paper on Urban Transport (September 2007) said that "every level of governance has an important and own role to play in the formulation and implementation of transport policy" and "this requires an interactive combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' policy making". In other words, what is needed is not only better partnership working with all sectors but better engagement between the levels of governance shown in Figure 1.

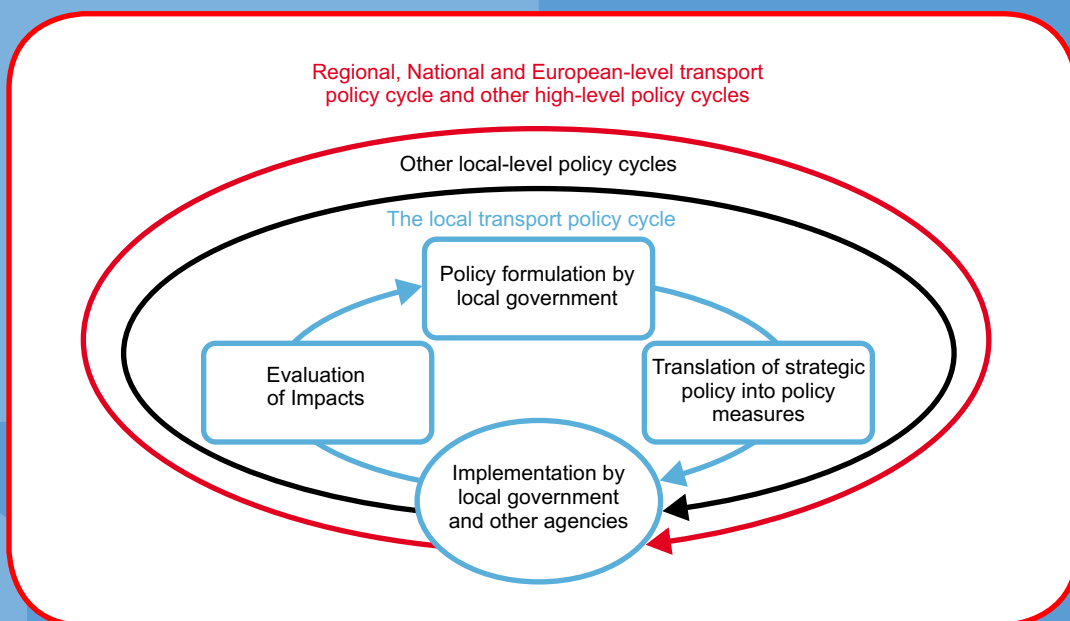


Figure 1: The different level at which policy and transport implementation interact

As well as there being multiple policy cycles, it is important to recognise that each cycle has its own stages: your policy cycle may be at one stage but it is important to recognise the stage at which the other actor's policy cycle is so as either to be able to get those who are involved in that policy cycle involved in your policy cycle or to get your objectives included, or even delivered, in someone else's policy cycle. For example, if you are involved in scheme implementation or evaluation it is unlikely that you will find a readily receptive audience in someone whose policy cycle is currently engaged in strategic policy discussions. Similarly, when you are developing your LTP (local transport plan), you may be less receptive to advances for scheme-level partnership working from another sector. Putting in the effort to try to fit these policy cycles that are working on different timescales together is an important element of partnership working. It is also important to remember, as noted above, that the local 'other' policy cycles – health, education, employment and so on – all have their commensurate national and higher-level cycles. Thus, working with the local representatives of those sectors may allow you not only to influence their local-level policy cycle but also to feed into their higher-level policy cycles.

Further, as is obvious, many partners and potential partners work in the private sector, but they will each have their own 'cycles' which are important to them. Furthermore, whoever is your significant 'other', you will need to be clear why you want to engage in a partnership and what it is you hope to get out of it. Finally, even if partnership working is imposed upon you, you may find that there are benefits in terms of ease of delivery, or of widening the scope of delivery, in embracing a more efficient form of partnership working. You may find yourself drawn into a partnership or partnership working by a more powerful sector or by a legislative imperative (e.g. Local Area Agreements, Multi-Agency Agreement, City-Region planning) and this guide can help you make the most of the opportunities that situation affords to make the case for transport within the partnership.

What is a partnership?

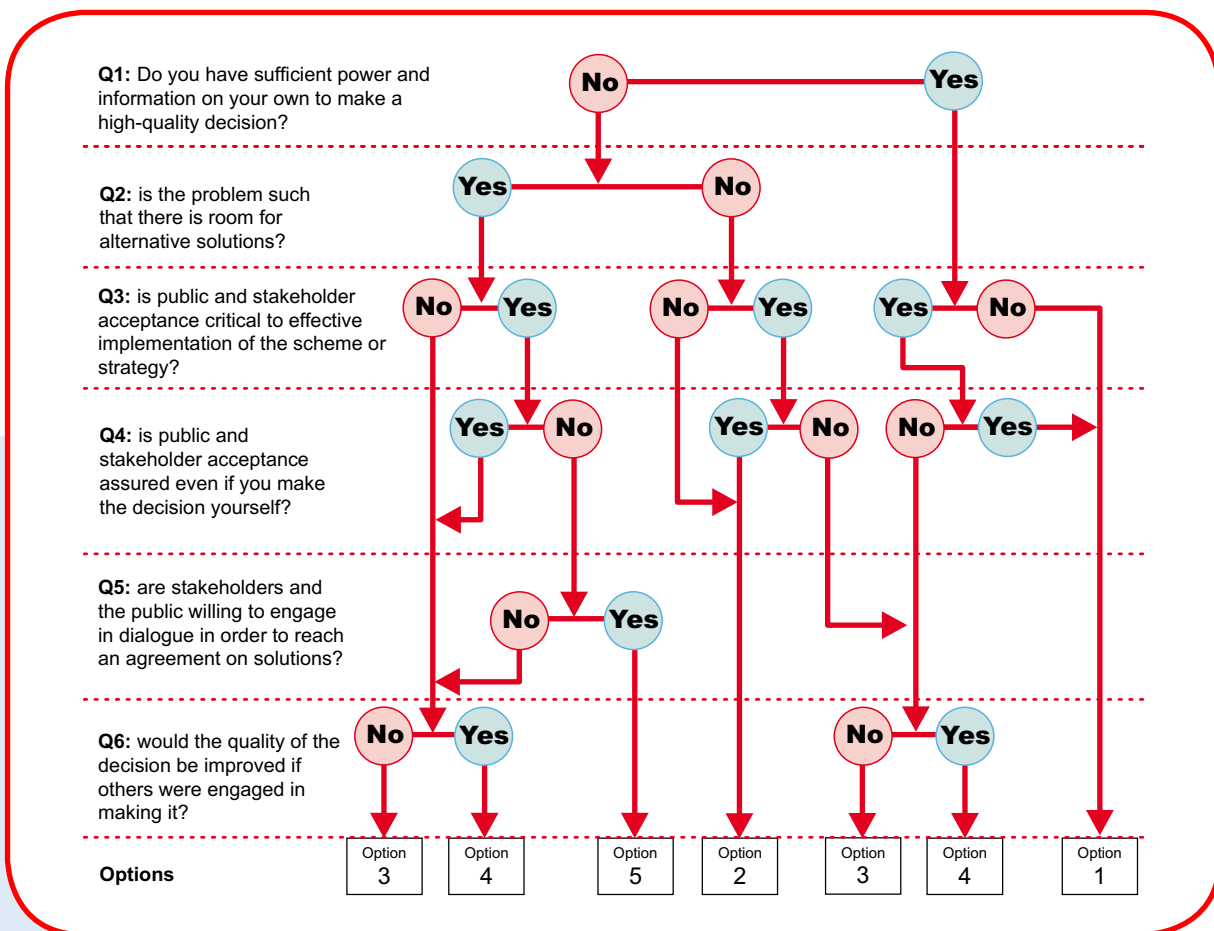
Put quite simply, a partnership is any *agreed, structured* cooperation between two or more parties. Partnerships are usually formed to allow partners to do something together that they could maybe not do separately. The word partnership, thus, can refer to the act of partnership such as a local authority entering into an agreement ('partnership') with a bus company to provide a public transport service but where the authority and the company keep their completely discrete identities. The word partnership can also refer to a [new] structure which is set up to provide a service. In the bus example just cited, this would be where the bus company and the local authority would have set up a new 'company' to procure the buses and run the service. The result from the point of view of the service user may be exactly the same in both cases but the partnership experience from the perspective of the local authority and the transport operating company would be very different. There are many reasons why one option may be chosen over another. One potential set of reasons is dealt with in the next chapter in Decision tree 2.

Bryson *et al* (2006) suggest that *cross-sector* collaborations are "partnerships involving government, business, nonprofits and philanthropies, communities, and/or the public as a whole" and they define such collaborations as "the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately" (*ibid*). Thus, partnerships are for a purpose. The following chapter will help you decide what your strategy should be to approach partnership working in a given circumstance.



Chapter 2: Choosing your partnership strategy

The following decision tree and text should help you decide what your strategy should be to approach partnership working in a given circumstance. Essentially, Robinson (2003) offers us five options and six questions for working through which of these five options may suggest the best strategy for our approach to partnership. Working through this decision tree may also suggest to us some new reasons why partnership working might be a useful option.



Decision tree number 2: Choosing your 'partnership' strategy (after Robinson, 2003)

The Options, which form a continuum and which shall be explored more fully below are, in brief:

- Option 1: that expert knowledge alone solves the problem.
- Option 2: that other stakeholders need to be involved but the decision remains yours to make.
- Option 3: that other stakeholders may help you make the decision.
- Option 4: that other stakeholders make the decision (but still you implement it).
- Option 5: that you relinquish power for a shared agenda to the partnership.

This Guide will help you particularly in following Options 3, 4, and 5 into fuller partnership working. Each Option will be explored in more depth in the next section.

Options for Partnership working

Looking at the above, and working through the decision tree should give you an option for partnership working which matches best your current needs.

It is important to remember that these Options are theoretical bases for action. They exist in a continuum of practice which ranges from making the decision oneself to fully-devolved responsibility. We shall go through each of these options in more depth in this section and in Chapter 4 we look at some relevant examples to illustrate how these work in practice. These options are theoretical and in practice the distinctions between them can appear blurred. Also, the tasks involved in these options are not mutually exclusive – they form a continuum of good practice. Good communication and good stakeholder engagement run through all of these and the cases cited below in Chapter 4.

Option 1

Option 1 is where your expert knowledge alone is probably sufficient to solve the problem. One should still tread carefully before making decisions that impact upon large numbers of people and you will, of course, need at all times to inform peers and other stakeholders. Working with peers and stakeholders is likely to be required but no significant effort is needed other than good communication. There are several guides which will be useful in following this Option. They will be introduced below. DISTILLATE can also help with information provision tools (see the DISTILLATE online tool for a Guide to DISTILLATE outputs).

Communication is, however, by no means, a clear and straightforward task. In order to communicate to stakeholders the fact that you actually *do* have sufficient information to make an informed decision, you may still need to ascertain that there are no viable alternative solutions via some form of stakeholder survey, and you will almost certainly need to check whether or not public and stakeholder acceptance are assured. This involves iterative, engaged and participative communication methods. The *Decision Makers' Guidebook* (May, 2005) will be an invaluable tool to help throughout this process. See particularly: sections 3 on the decision making context – note particularly the section on stakeholder involvement; section 4 on approaches to decision making; and section 5, participation, on information provision. Information provision is defined as “a one-way process to keep those with an interest in the strategy [or scheme] informed” (*ibid.*)

At this stage of collaborative working there is no formal partnership as there is no need for one. This does not mean that you cannot communicate through existing partnerships such as LSPs (local strategic partnerships) and so on. Another difficult and time-consuming process is actually identifying the relevant stakeholders to whom you need to communicate. Considering who is likely to be impacted by the scheme is usually a minimum requirement. If you are looking for tools to help with communication and engagement then you could look at the *Guidemaps report volume 1* (Kelly et al, 2004) section 3 on engagement; see also the *Practical Approaches to Participation* booklet (Richards et al, 2007) section 4 on approaches to participation. *Guidemaps* usefully reminds us that these processes take time, skills and cost so it is advantageous to factor in a communications budget even if you do not consider partnership working necessary. Do not hesitate to bring in trained communicators rather than relying on your own skills alone. Good examples of participatory information provision work include that done by Sheffield on air quality management and cited in *Steps to Better Practice: Guidance for local authorities on LQMA consultation* (Longhurst et al. 2006).

When do you want to move beyond Option 1 and into Option 2?

A fundamental question you need to ask in Option 1 is ‘why am I communicating this to these stakeholders?’; if you need to communicate to them then do you really need also to listen to them? – i.e. do you need to move to option 2? Option 2 is really only a logical progression and an extension of option 1. It is where you need information from some other stakeholder groups but the decision remains yours to make. The primary flow of information is reversed from Option 1, above, and you listen rather than talk. Consultation is defined as “where the views of stakeholders and the general public are sought at particular stages of the study and the results are input back into the strategy formulation” or scheme design (May, 2005, *op.cit.*). Although you need the participation of others there is still no formal partnership needed. As with Option 1, the *Decision Makers Guidebook* and *Guidemaps* guides mentioned will be useful. Communication remains central, but you need to add consultation tools to your arsenal. See particularly the *Decision Makers Guidebook* section 5, participation, on consultation and the *Practical Approaches...* (*op. cit.*) section 5 on ‘engaging, targeting and responding’.



We will not here crowd this guide with case examples of good practice in Options 1 & 2. However, DISTILLATE Project B (*Option Generation*) Products B3 and B4 are both examples of good practice for Option 2, although they can stray into the territory of Option 3. The dividing line is who retains power over certain aspects of the decision making process.

When do you want to move beyond Option 2 and into Option 3?

Option 3 is where you may wish to consider releasing a certain level of decision-making power to partnership. You need to share information with them (i.e. your impending partners) and, building on the good communication and good stakeholder engagement of Options 1 and 2, you now need to share your problem with 'them' and 'they' can help you find solutions. However, the final decision still remains yours to make. In Option 3, power and authority remain vested in you or your authority. Due to legislative and governance structure, this has often been the only type of partnership that could be aspired to in practice. The final decision still remains yours to make but you attempt take others' views on board at all stages. As Richards (*op.cit.*) says, these sorts of processes "should only be considered when there is a commitment to listening to, and acting on, the issues raised". DISTILLATE has designed several option generation and appraisal tools which can help at every stage of putting this type of partnership working into practice. Formal partnerships can be a great help but remember that so can informal partnerships. There are few guides – hence this guide. In the case examples you will notice that examples of Option 3 look in practice very like Option 4, but in Option 3 you will see that the transport planner remains responsible.

When do you want to move beyond Option 3 and into Option 4?

Option 4 is where you need to share power: you need to listen but you also need to start to release decision-making power to others or to a formal or informal partnership not only in setting what needs to be done but also in deciding what to do, and how to do it. Thus, you need to go one step beyond Option 3 and allow the partnership to assess the problem and not just suggest possible instruments. You need also to start to hand over the decision about what to do to the partnership to make. However – maybe due to legislative and governance structures for example – responsibility remains yours. Otherwise, Option 4 is to all intents and purposes similar to Option 3.

When do you want to move beyond Option 4 and into Option 5?

Option 5 is where you need full, formal partnership working to reach agreement on – and implement – a solution. Further, and this is where the distinction from Option 4 lies, responsibility is now devolved to the partnership. Under these circumstances you must set up a formal partnership. With the greater drive towards partnership working and partnership delivery – for example with City Region planning and with formalized Multi-Agency [funding] Agreements, Option 5 is now becoming a realistic alternative. The urban regeneration example from Sheffield probably represents the most that can be under the current UK structures of local governance. While Sheffield City Council Transport had handed decision-making powers over to Sheffield One in some cases of transport planning and for some scheme delivery with respect to air quality, SCC transport retained the responsibility. However, this level of partnership working shows how a partnership can deliver things that no one department could hope to achieve working on their own.

In such situations, the identification of key stakeholders is important as is the need to decide how to engage with them. It is further important to keep in mind how your engagement with key stakeholders (such as consultants, transport operating companies, and so on) impinges upon your engagement with other stakeholders who may appear not so key to delivery (such as other sector colleagues or the public). The short-term delivery of goals should not outweigh the challenge to develop a durable partnership to provide a long-term delivery framework.

Chapter 3: Factors which can help achieve success

As we have seen above from the Sheffield example, the same approach can be used across internal and external partnerships. Unless you work in a single-policy-area organisation such as a Passenger Transport Executive you will also find that your own organisation has many different, often competing, policy objectives and interlocking policy cycles. Dealing successfully with these 'competing' policy cycles is a mark of good partnership working.

However, when it comes to initiating partnerships like this you are never going to get other members of even your organisation to deliver on your objectives if they think that you are doing it for reasons that they do not agree with or are not interested in. You need to show that it meets an objective that they are interested in. An example of some pointers which show how transport relates to other people's policy cycles and how transport can deliver non-transport outcomes include:

- Reducing deaths and serious injuries relieves strain on healthcare services
- Reducing congestion can have economic benefits
- Reducing emissions from vehicles improves human health as well as the wider environment
- Decreasing urban traffic reduces pollution and community severance, especially affecting those in lower income areas
- Reducing car use reduces the demand for parking space in urban areas
- A reduction in car usage can increase the customer base for public transport and thus lead to improved services
- A reduction in car usage can improve the scope for physical activity whilst travelling, and thus contributes to decreasing obesity and coronary heart disease
- Building fewer trunk roads to cope with increased mobility reduces landscape loss and use of construction materials
- Reducing travel overall can contribute to meeting our climate change targets (list adapted from Rosen 2001)

Further, DISTILLATE and other research suggests that there are a number of factors that enable and maintain partnership working within organisations. A review of the literature on integrating environmental policy into mainstream policy making and on the design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations and partnerships suggests that the following factors (see Box 1 below) are all important in aiding effective delivery. Selection from the factors in the box below can both help you to set up a successful partnership and also troubleshoot an existing partnership to make it more efficient. One truism is that no one factor alone will make a partnership successful. It may not be necessary to achieve *all* of the factors in the box below, but in order to maximise the potential for delivery you should be aiming to achieve a significant number of the factors. Partnerships work best when there is a strong structure and a strong process. That structure should include most of the following factors 1 to 11 while the process and political factors, 12 to 19 are equally critical for success.

- 1 Partnerships should be well planned – don't just leave them to chance;
- 2 Partnerships work best when there are champions at all levels and in each sector;
- 3 Partnerships work best when the role of each partner is clear;
- 4 Partnerships work best when there are good internal communications;
- 5 Partnerships should build upon the strengths of partners and powers and tasks should be reallocated within the partnership to make the best use of partners' strengths
- 6 Partnerships work best when power relationships are equalised within the relationship;
- 7 Partnerships work best when decisions are taken at the centre of the partnership and in a transparent manner;
- 8 Partnerships work best when partners work in an open and sharing manner and trust is engendered;
- 9 Partnerships work best when the staff are located near to each other and where there is continuity of staff;
- 10 Partnerships work best when there is a clear link between the agendas of the participating actors and agencies, this can foster a business approach rather than an enforced 'bureaucracy' approach;
- 11 Partnerships can be helped by mandatory requirement;
- 12 Partnerships are most likely to succeed when there is agreement as to the nature of the problem, and actors and agencies have similar goals and a similar 'world view';
- 13 Partnerships are most likely to succeed when actors and agencies all have a need for partnership working and when all can gain benefit through partnership working;
- 14 Partnerships are most likely to succeed when partners have access to full information on the consequences of their choices and the decisions taken by partnerships should be evaluated as well as appraised;
- 15 Partnerships work best when there is a history of collaborative working upon which to build;
- 16 Partnerships work best when successes are recognised and built upon to create institutional learning;
- 17 Partnerships work best when there is political support;
- 18 Partnerships work best when evidence is separated from politics;
- 19 More cross-sectoral assessment tools are needed for use by cross-sectoral partnership actors.

Box 1: Factors facilitating successful partnership

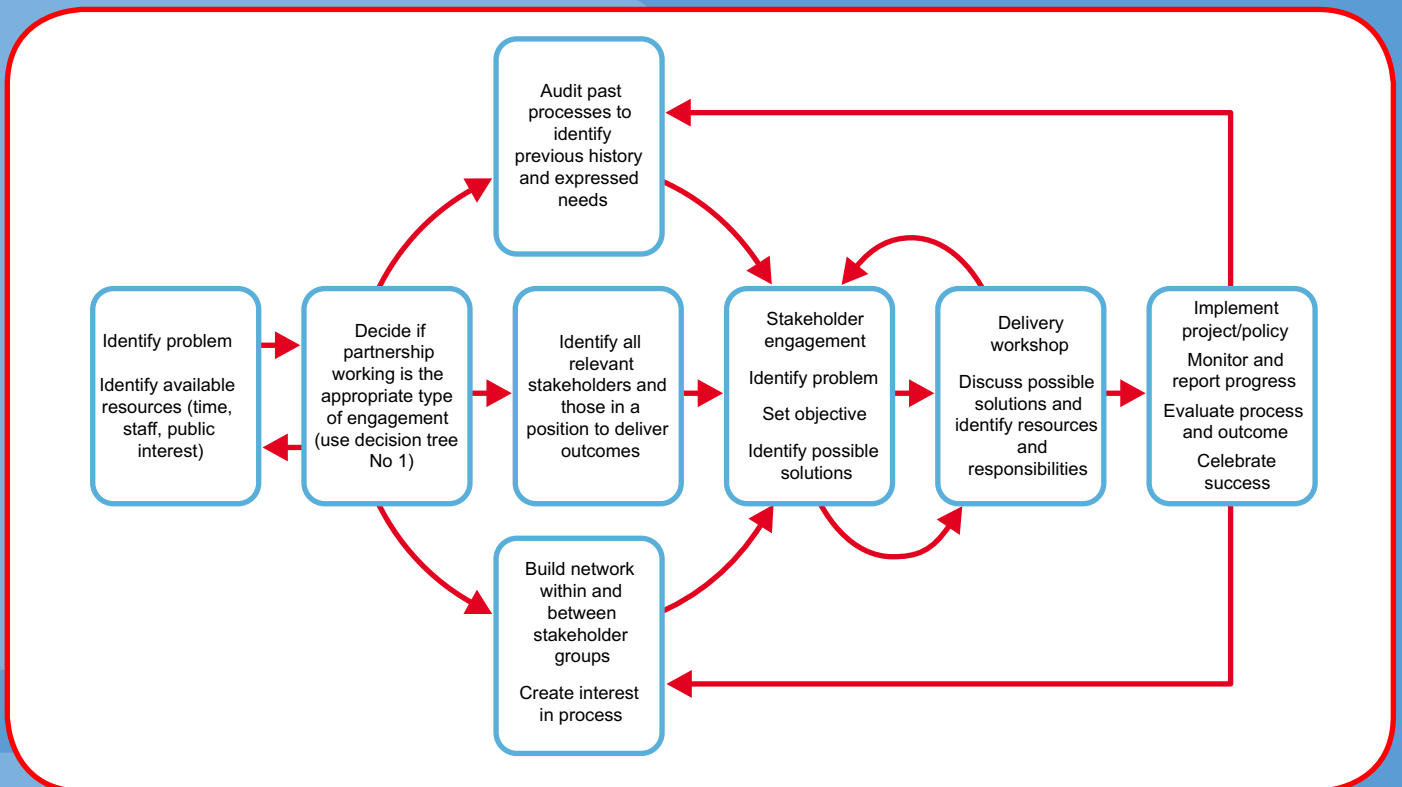
We shall now treat each one of them separately and try to point out how you can help in trying to apply these factors in your own work.

1. Good planning

This almost goes without saying (hopefully)! However, see Practical Approaches ... (Richards et al), section 7, where they note the following six points. These, and the attached decision tree, should show you how to start thinking about developing a partnership. Further, if you are involved in a partnership you can observe the following characteristics. To improve the partnership within which you are working, you should:

- publicise the process;
- ensure that the necessary information is complete, understandable and accessible;
- include time for reflection and review;
- think through the resource implications;
- handle inputs from other stakeholders; and
- establish mechanisms for feedback, evaluation and delivery.

Richards et al link these factors thus:



Decision tree number 3: a planning loop for a partnership – adapted from Richards et al (2007).

2. Champions at all levels and in each sector

This is a critical issue. A partnership cannot 'fly on one wing' and each agency involved in your partnership should have a named actor to be the 'champion' for making sure that the partnership works. This does not mean that that champion needs to do all the work though. Appointing a champion is not a way of delegating the work to a junior colleague! Of course, get the individuals' agreement before nominating them a champion.

Further, champions are needed on each appropriate level at which the partnership is working. Partnerships tend not to work so well if one partner is working at junior officer level and the other at senior. Partnerships across local governance agencies may also find that officer champions and elected member champions can both be useful. Working with agencies outside the public sector needs judgment as to what is the appropriate level at which these links are made.

3. Clear role for each partner

If you are trying to initiate a partnership or partnership working it is important to make clear to each actor involved (at all levels) why the partnership is being instigated and what it is that you want each of them to do. Allow them to say that they are not the best actor to involve but ask them from another person from their organisation to replace them. The reason for the inclusion of their organisation is critical for the smooth and meaningful working of the partnership.

4. Good internal communications

It is critical that a lot of effort is spent on internal communications. Partnerships that have a secretariat or the use of a secretariat work much better because partners are more fully informed. Circulation of information in advance of partners' meetings is also good practice. Better information facilitates partners becoming more involved. Communications is a complex field and the mechanism of communication (memos, e-mails, minutes, telephone calls, etc) should not be confused with the communication process (sender – message – receiver).

5. Build upon strengths

The actor or the agency within the partnership which should implement any task or part of the shared agenda should be the one that has the particular strength in that area. The Sheffield air quality case (see Case Example 5) shows us how partners, powers and tasks should be allocated, and indeed reallocated, within the partnership to make the best use of partners' strengths and to implement their shared agenda.

6. No partner should dominate

A corollary of number 5 is that, where possible, resources should be used to equalise power relationships within the partnership. This can be difficult when you are working with a very dominant policy sector as it can be natural for that dominant sector to try to dominate the partnership. However, if it is a properly constituted partnership then outcomes should be dependent on each partner and none should be allowed to dominate. This may require professional mediation or facilitation.

7. Decisions taken centrally

Decisions should be taken in a transparent manner at the centre of the partnership. It is not a partnership if partners come to the table and find that decisions are already taken in camera or in another forum. Partnerships should never be used to 'rubber-stamp' a decision that has actually been taken elsewhere. A clear communications strategy which allows each partner to understand what decisions are being taken, when, where and why... and what the implications of those decisions might be, can overcome any difficulty in this area.

8. Open and sharing

Following on from numbers 6 and 7, partnership working must be open and sharing. If you are working so that power relations are equalised, or more equal, within the partnership and there is good communication, with decision making being taken transparently at the centre of the partnership, you will start to engender trust, trust of partners for each other, but also trust of partners *for the partnership*. Such open working practices can help conflict resolution, or even better, help achieve conflict avoidance. It is important to acknowledge that you do not need to agree all the time to work in partnership.

9. Staff working location

It has been shown that partnerships can work very well when staff are located in proximate locations. However, this does not mean that by moving everyone into a new building they will start developing good working partnership relations. If staff are located far from each other, effort needs to be put into developing formal *and informal* partnerships *at each level* at which the partnership is expected to work. This means that not only should senior officers meet but junior officers may need to organise informal meeting sessions as well as attending formal meetings. Partnerships cannot survive on "discussions at the water cooler" [or coffee machine] alone.

10. Links between agendas

For a partnership to work there must be an obvious link between the agendas of the participating actors and agencies. This is not an arduous task for transport as transport is rarely an end in itself but a means to an end. Thus it is transport *to* something... in the partnership you may need to concentrate upon how that something is reached while making the point that without transport it will not be delivered. By 'selling' you partner what s/he wants you can foster a business approach rather than an enforced bureaucracy approach where you are instigating a partnership because a central government department says so. Partnerships are a good way of dealing with complex problems such as those thrown up by the cross-cutting, cross-sectoral issues that are common in transport.

11 Mandatory requirement

Partnerships can be helped along – particularly in allocating officer time allocation despite the potential resource drain that is becoming obvious as you work through these factors – by a mandatory requirement. However, it is nigh on worthless if it is only a requirement of one agency or actor. Thus, making partnership working mandatory for *all parties* can help. This drive towards partnership can 'come from the top' locally or from central government. However, where this is the case, other factors need to be brought to bear to avoid a minimum effort approach to (thus potentially unsuccessful) partnership working.

12. Similar goals

Partnerships are most likely to succeed when there is agreement as to the nature of the problem, and actors and agencies have similar goals and a similar 'world view'. In other words if you want to work with a partner some little effort needs to be expended on finding what is that common understanding of the problem and finding a common 'world view' or view of the way the world *should be*. Such understandings can come about and be shared via the formal and informal relations and meetings that are advocated in above. This is different from the structural factor in point 10 which is about the tasks each agency needs to do – this is about 'higher' aims of organisations.



13. Shared need

Partnerships are most likely to succeed when actors and agencies all have a need for partnership working and can benefit through partnership working. In practice, that can also mean acknowledging that there might be difficulty for actors and agencies operating individually and also that there is a risk of failure if you try to tackle the job on your own. This is probably best realised by 'partnership' agencies separately before they come to the partnership.

14. Informed

Partnerships are most likely to succeed when partners have access to full information on the consequences of their choices. This is seemingly simple but important: one of the reasons that there may be a shared need is that decisions and actions in one sector have unintended or even unknown consequences in another sector. Making all partners aware of the consequences of actions in each sector is a significant communications task.

Further, the decisions taken by the partnership should be appraised *in each sector*, or preferably using a cross-sector appraisal tool (see below). Furthermore, it is important that decisions are evaluated after they have been implemented. This is an important way of creating a culture of success (see below) or of learning from mistakes if appropriate.

15. History

Partnerships work best when there is a history of collaborative working upon which to build. This can only come with time. However, it is possible to build one partnership on the history of another using the same partners.

16. Success recognised

Partnerships work best when successes are recognised and built upon to create institutional learning. Institutional learning involves individuals within the partnership learning and sharing that knowledge within their organisations so that each organisation learns something it could not have done on its own. It is also important that the partnership itself learns and 'remembers', especially where there is risk of relatively high staff turnover. Without mechanisms to support staff sharing what they have learned through partnership working, if that member of staff is lost to the organisation then their knowledge is lost too.

Also, recognising the successes of a partnership can help foster trust in the institution of the partnership itself and will encourage others who may not be currently amenable to partnership working to consider it more carefully. The success, for example, of a PTE working with Job Centre Plus (see case example 1 in the next chapter) in delivering projects on their shared agenda can only act as an encouragement to those actors from sectors that are currently less keen to work in partnership with the PTE.

17. Political support

Partnerships work best when there is political support. This is almost so obvious that it is often forgotten. The need for political support at all levels matches the need for champions at all levels (see above). Remember, though, that there are political windows of opportunity when difficult decisions are politically possible and other times when only popular decisions are likely to be taken, so matching the policy cycles of different sectors needs to be further matched to the political cycles within those sectors.

18. Unaligned evidence

Partnerships work best when evidence is separated from politics. This is an important point. Evidence, and how it is used, should be free from the 'taint' of being used for any other reason other than to support the best possible decision being made.

19. Cross-sectoral assessment tools

Finally, it was determined from the research carried out for this guide that more cross-sectoral assessment tools are needed for use by cross-sectoral partnership actors. Such tools need not only to assess data but also to communicate it across the sectors. DISTILLATE provides a range of such tools access to which is facilitated by our web tool which partnerships are encouraged to use.

In conclusion, remember that getting the job done is not just about being right. There are many reasons why 'right' decisions are not made. For example, many of our current problems might be made easier if the European Commission had decided in favour of the lean-burn engine technology instead of the catalytic converter. That decision was made because those who supported the catalytic converter made a more persuasive argument, not because their argument was any better. Partnership working involves patience, staying with the game, understanding the other person's point of view. The cases above show that to be the case. Do not be afraid to note what are your non-negotiables (KSIs (killed and seriously injured), congestion, air quality, and so on). However, you should not cite issues as non-negotiable just because you do not want to deal with them.

Partnerships, whether you are driven to them by a top-down agenda or from your own need are a useful way of working. They can be a way of overcoming consultation fatigue with stakeholders and colleagues and help you get the job done.



Chapter 4: Case Examples of Partnership working

The following five case examples of partnerships include:

Example 1: A passenger transport executive (PTE) example of how to engage with other-sector stakeholders in setting local transport plan (LTP) targets. Example 1 shows us a good example of communication building leading to trust across sectors and producing meaningful policy outputs.

Example 2: A new structure to share information between local authorities on strategic issues. This example shows us that sometimes it is necessary to go beyond 'working with partners' to develop a formal partnership structure to share information (and leading, potentially to the sorts of policy output seen in example 1).

Example 3: Coordination of internal departments regarding bus planning. This example looks in a bit more detail and depth at how an authority can foster good partnership working by looking at its own internal working practices and procedures.

Example 4: Common data management for coordinating inter-organisational bus information and signalling. This case shows, again, how formal external structures may be useful to help partnerships develop, work and deliver.

Example 5: The city council, urban regeneration and air quality example. This example shows us clearly how the same approach – a commitment to fully-fledged partnership working and a devolution of power for a shared agenda – can be applied to both internal and formal external partnerships.

These are all real-life examples clustered around Chapter 2's Options 3, 4 and 5 approaches. They should not be confused with Options 1 through 5. They all show sophisticated levels and methods of sharing information and in some cases, power.

Example.1: A PTE example of how to engage sector stakeholders in setting LTP targets

On Merseyside, a range of organisations have been involved in the development of LTP2 targets. Interviews with Merseytravel practitioners suggest that working with some sectors has been more productive than others, in particular, working with the Job Centre Plus and Primary Care Trusts has been very effective. Practitioners from the PTE also noted that Partnership Groups have been established in order to allow Merseytravel to work collaboratively with the Local Authorities, and other sectors such as health, education and employment. These were viewed positively as they were thought to provide a formal way for such organisations to work together (especially between sectors without existing working relationships), allowing the negotiation of indicators and targets, and encouraging other organisations to 'buy in' to indicators and targets. These formal structures were also viewed positively from a Local Authority perspective, allowing local priorities and concerns to be discussed with Merseytravel, and targets to be developed with these issues in mind.

However, utilising these formal structures did not always ensure effective collaborative working. Where organisations shared similar priorities, targets and timeframes, collaborative working was more likely to be driven forward. As a result, some sectors were keener to work in partnership than others. There is, as it were, an opportunity-cost involved. Also, whilst Merseytravel has established formal structures in order to allow partnership working with a range of organisations, not all of these other organisations necessarily have the same structures in place. Where formal structures did not exist, cross-sector collaborative

working was considered more challenging by the Merseytravel practitioners, particularly where data was required from other organisations and there was no formal mechanism in place to allow this.

Alongside formal structures for collaborative working, informal links are often developed by Merseytravel staff. For example, whilst Strategic Accessibility Partnerships were developed to enable employment, education and health sectors to work with Merseytravel, the more successful forms of partnership working were thought to have been bolstered by informal meetings and discussions through designated representatives. These meetings were driven by common interest and similar priorities.

Whilst links do exist both formally and informally, the development of more formal links at a range of officer levels was an essential improvement suggested by practitioners. Experiences of joint working vary immensely but fieldwork with Merseytravel has emphasised the importance of champions at a range of policy levels and also allowing adequate time and resources for working in partnership. Most importantly, the value of shared goals and objectives or mandatory requirements is cited as a factor that contributes to successful targets setting and local assessment of options. Further, these links are not limited to the level of transport planning alone: good, collaborative cross-sectoral working practices exist between Merseytravel and agencies at the implementation level as well. For example, Travelwise works in partnership to help people in Merseyside make smarter travel choices to walk, cycle and use public transport. Scheme partnerships with the Local Strategic Partnerships, Job Centre Plus and the health sector are continuing to deliver practical benefits especially through the work of Merseytravel's dedicated Partnership Officer.

In this example, we see signs of mutual trust being developed between certain partners. The transport competency of Merseytravel is complemented by the sectoral competency of the other organisations. The officer-level partnerships are balanced by the higher-level commitment to partnership working. In particular, the message from this example is twofold. The first is that good partnerships need a lot of effort. They need to be driven, at all levels. The second is that when one organisation makes that effort, and reaches out to engage with other organisations in meaningful dialogue then it can be to the benefit of all. The initial 'problem' for Merseytravel transport planners was simply how to come up with a good LTP. The end result has been a range of partnerships across the levels at strategic and project implementation levels.

However, the sheer effort that this form of partnership working takes, the person hours required to attend meetings, work at relationships, understand stakeholders and engage in communication exercises make it very intensive. One way to foster similar relationships – albeit less cross-sector in nature – is shown by Example 2.

Example 2: A new structure to share information between local authorities on strategic issues

South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) is well on the way to good partnership working for a consortium. They are one of four transport consortia in Wales and comprise four local authorities in South West Wales (Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Neath-Port Talbot). The Councils are all quite different in terms of geography, population density, economy, political make-up (and even language!). When SWWITCH began in 1998 it was very informal with Chief Officers from the four Councils getting together to share information and best practice on strategic transport issues. It has evolved since then and a formal joint committee was established in 2005. This comprises three Members from each authority along with Chief Technical Officers and a range of external stakeholders and meets quarterly. The Management Group comprises the Chief Technical Officers and transport policy officers from each Council along with the SWWITCH Co-ordinator and that meets monthly. Under that is the Officer working group which is the

SWWITCH Coordinator again, her two staff and the Council Transport Officers with responsibility for transport policy/strategy and they meet at least once a week.

There are four Welsh transport consortia in Wales and they are now charged with preparing Regional Transport Plans which will replace Local Transport Plans in Wales. This means that SWWITCH are in the position of having to prioritise across the regional and across modes: earlier in 2007, SWWITCH were awarded a prize for the best consortium development in the Wales Transport Awards. It is fair to say SWWITCH have got a good agreement and good working relationships although their Coordinator thinks "we still have some difficult times ahead of us, particularly when we come to develop a regional programme". SWWITCH is an example of good communication between neighbouring local authorities that was in the right place at the right time to provide strategic input to Wales's new RTPs.

NB. SWWITCH was not a DISTILLATE project – Contact person: SWWITCH Coordinator, Sue Miles.

SWWITCH operates in a different way from the Merseytravel-based Example 1. There is good trust in process and clear ownership of process. Here in this Welsh example the partnership has been formalised. One result of this formalisation is that it is less the job of the individual officers in the organisations that formed the original partnership than it is the job of the SWWITCH secretariat to make sure that the partnership is delivering. However, because each of the partner organisations is actively involved in SWWITCH there is a commitment no less than that of Merseytravel's to make sure that transport is well planned and well delivered. Each of the organisations involved has had to invest in the partnership (consortium). SWWITCH is well placed to capitalise on its good start to deliver a regional transport programme for the Region. However, SWWITCH – as it is a *transport* consortium – needs to work at working cross-sectorally. Here Merseytravel maybe has a head start as its efforts have been put into working across the sectors to deliver cross-sectoral benefits for the City/Region.

Example 3: Coordination of internal departments regarding bus planning

One of the case study authorities integrally involved in DISTILLATE was Bristol. Bristol tried several different approaches to initiate organisational change following an Audit Commission Best Value review of their service delivery. The first notable attempt was a bottom up process of all staff identifying how they could be more effective in their work and identifying specific actions that could be implemented in the short and medium term. Many of the practical ideas on how to bring about effective change in these group meetings became more difficult when the implications of this were discussed by senior decision makers in management meetings. But a momentum had started, and after three reorganisation attempts at aligning the transport and land use sections to the key priorities, a new management team was recruited for a new department of Planning, Transport and Sustainable Development Policy enabling the Director to concentrate on engaging with regional bodies on planning and transportation. Bus patronage – as an indicator – also serves as an integrating force, being used across five reporting streams in the authority (LTP, Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring report, the Local Area Agreement, the Corporate and Council plan, and the Local Quality of Life report). Organisational changes were also the key to ensuring project management of the enhanced bus proposals. Most

notably, a Joint Working Group was established to implement the Bus Improvement Corridors through integrating the urban design with the traffic and transport team.

The establishment of this Group brought delivery functions together so that they have a common reporting line at middle management level for key projects and for joint working on the scheme assessment process. This has involved learning from earlier bus enhancement schemes about how the prescribed processes of each of the specialist teams (e.g. legal, planning, safety, design, and so on) impact on the overall delivery schedule, and where the sticking points might be. Another internal innovation, which is relevant here, is the establishment of a communications team in the Traffic and Transport section. The Joint Working Group has introduced customer testing of the way it presents information in consultation exercises and on the Local Authority web-site as a way of improving the information flow to residents and traders. The closer working relationship the Local Authority has developed with First, the bus operator, is part of the general learning process about understanding the value and concerns of other actors, and thereby building up levels of trust as a basis for future agency.

Thus, not only is this an example of good communication between sectors; it is an example of how decisions on design can be given over to a successful partnership team.

This example shows how, at the scheme-level, partnerships can be just as effective. Again there is good ownership of process and concomitant delivery.

Example 4: Common Data Management for coordination of bus information and signalling

Although not directly involved in DISTILLATE as a case study, the BIAS system (Bus Information and Signalling) introduced by Glasgow City Council and supported by SPT (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport) is cited by Transport Scotland as a good example of partnership working. The partners involved are Glasgow City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and First bus.

BIAS essentially works by linking two computer systems: the first is an urban traffic control system that prioritises bus movements along quality bus corridors and the second is a GPS-based tracking system which provides information on bus movements. This information is used to give information to passengers waiting at bus shelters. Further, if a bus is running behind schedule, BIAS will attempt to bring it back on schedule by using the traffic signal control system SCOOT to prioritise its progression through traffic signals, thus making bus travel more reliable and reducing journey time as well as providing better passenger information.

However, at the heart of the BIAS system lies an integrated data management facility based on Mott MacDonald's "Common Data Management Facility". Mott MacDonald describe CDMS as being "the core of the BIAS system, providing a single central management mechanism, integrating new and existing systems, and providing a common operator interface to reduce operator load and resource demands within the traffic control centre". It "analyses data such as events, congestion and bus link journey times"; proposes "pre-prepared responses to resolve network problems." and "CDMF also forms the heart of a city-wide car park guidance system integrating live car park occupancy feeds, with information displayed on VMS at key locations." Further, "BIAS serves a number of stakeholders in addition to Glasgow City Council, including West Dunbartonshire Council and First Glasgow providing these partners with a comprehensive overview of network conditions, allowing better multi-modal network monitoring and management" (factual information taken from Mott MacDonald at http://www.cdmf.info/client_glasgow.htm).

This Scottish example shows how the local-level partnership working seen in Example 3 can be replicated with a formal structure at the wider cross-authority level. The BIAS example shows how the use of formalised data sharing and professional facilitation of partnerships can aid delivery. In this case, the partnership is formal and set specifically for a single purpose, unlike Example 2 which is a more generic information sharing partnership.

Although considered a great success by Glasgow, Dunbartonshire, First and SPT, the Quality Bus Corridor delivery did run into some local resistance. This might have been avoided by better communication with external stakeholders such as the public.

Example 5 The City Council, Urban Regeneration and Air Quality

In Sheffield, regeneration of the city has been managed by an urban regeneration company (URC). The City Council entrusted staff, control and money to the then URC, known as Sheffield One (S1). In particular, some aspects of transport planning of changes to the city centre network were 'handed over' to S1. The redevelopment of Sheffield's city centre has been considered vital for the prosperity of South Yorkshire. This is acknowledged to require good access and transport links. S1 – the URC – was a partnership between Sheffield City Council (SCC), Yorkshire Forward (YF) and English Partnerships and the transport aspects have been handled in partnership by SCC, South Yorks. PTE, YF and S1. It has helped deliver the inner relief road – which not only allows a better gateway into the city but also allows the creation of a safer, pedestrian-friendly core especially around the station thereby allowing better access by train. The partnership succeeded on the shared agenda to create a high-quality, safe, pedestrian dominated city centre; re-focussing the public transport system to enhance passenger experience and, generally, to make it easier to access the city centre. Several factors are important in the success of the city centre experience. The SCC transport planners put their faith in

S1 and relinquished control of some aspects of planning to the partnership for their shared agenda. The partnership proved itself able to deliver and had a clear, well-functioning structure and organisation (see Forrester & Snell, 2006, section 3.3).

However, this was not a one-off. Transport schemes in the city are also managed as part of the Clean Air Partnership and SCC. Transport has entrusted staff, control and money to the AQ department. This shows a remarkable level of faith by the transport planners involved and their faith has been backed up by practical (and in some cases financial) support in terms of supporting data and so on. Sheffield is embarking on setting up a Low Emission Strategy which is working with bus operators in the city to reduce NOx levels in the city centre. The Air Action Officer, Travel Plans Officer, and Car Clubs Officer all work for the Environmental Protection Service of SCC and this is supported at senior officer level and by political support (Transport Member, Sheffield 'Cabinet'). Transport planners at SCC work integrally with the city centre travel plans; car share and car clubs; and cycling, walking and public transport strategies. Air quality is one of the shared priorities for LTP2 and the partnership approach of Sheffield transport has allowed Sheffield to become one of the leaders in the field of air quality management.

This example is critical. It shows – at all times – at least one partner committed to building mutual trust, mutual understanding, and working towards mutual delivery. However, one comment on the process is that it has not always been recognised by all 'partners'; in other words some partner organisations have not always had the same understanding. This shows the importance of communication. Nonetheless, it shows how efficient delivery can be accomplished by what looks like a very different approach from Example 1. The Sheffield One example does show how understanding, trust, ownership and delivery go hand-in-hand with sharing power and building upon competencies and a high-level policy commitment.

The important message from Sheffield, and from Bristol, is that the local authority could not have delivered on its own, either in the decision making process or in the delivery – hence the use of partnerships. In Sheffield in particular we see transport becoming one element of a broader strategy both cross-sectorally within the local authority and inter-organisationally within the city.

Looking at the difficulties experienced by a very positively minded team at Merseytravel reminds us that partnership working is not always easy. However, running through decision tree 2 (above, Chapter 2) and identifying who are the actors that you have in mind as you answer the questions on stakeholder acceptance and input can be an honest way of acknowledging whom you need to engage with. Looking at the Merseytravel example above shows us that, with the right mindset, huge steps can be taken forward.

Looking at the SWWITCH example shows us again that establishing formal structures is an important part of successful partnership working. The fact that SWWITCH has a secretariat – the SWWITCH Coordinator and her staff – means that the partnership can work efficiently.

However, one lesson from these cases is that partnerships really need to include all stakeholders from the outset. Even successful technical delivery (such as with BIAS) can be improved by the inclusion of all stakeholders from the start and by practising good communication.

The author is happy to discuss any of the issues raised in this guide: contact information is on the back cover.

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