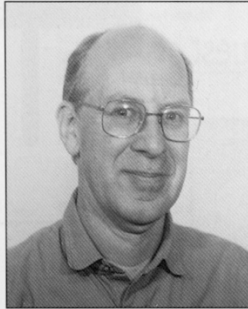


Trying to break the habit



IN TO VIEW

Continuing the series profiling members of staff we talk to Tim Pharoah who is regularly in the news at the moment lobbying for a new way of thinking in transport

"TRANSPORT specialist, Tim Pharoah has urged Britain's planners to help 'break the car habit' and called for a new approach to tackling the problems of traffic throughout the country," reported the Dundee Courier in September.

Tim Pharoah, Reader in Transport and Urban Planning at South Bank, has found similar reports of his views on transport planning are becoming commonplace in the press.

Articles have focused on the links he has made between motorisation and urban decline and deprivation.

He argues that increased travel does not necessarily mean an increased quality of life and claims that by comparison with other countries, the amount of traffic in Britain appears to be greater than could be justified by economic output.

Further, they mention how he has singled out common misconceptions in current transport and planning policy, including the view that improving public transport would automatically reduce car use and that restraining car commuting into town centre would reduce road traffic."

Meet Tim Pharoah and you'll find a quiet, unassuming man – ask him why he's been the subject of numerous articles in the press recently

and he'll answer modestly: "Well... I do like to throw the odd large stone in the pond – cause a few ripples when I speak – but I'm not really saying anything different from anyone else."

But Tim Pharoah is different from others. He has stuck to his principles and kept pushing the same point for years.

Fascinated with transport ever since he was a boy, Tim read town planning at university – his dissertation, a study of the planning policies of the time – before working in various town council planning departments. He joined South Bank in 1975.

During these early years he quickly came to realise the 70s policy of trying to adapt the city to the car was impossible. "Planners were encouraging the population to move out of city centres while building huge road schemes to transport them back in to work and shop – it was evident the idea was failing."

"But it was not just the policies that were the problem," he comments, "it is the planning mechanisms. They were unintegrated and out of touch with the people."

He recalls a battle he helped fight in the 70s, "Plans were being formed to build an inner London ring motorway –

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they were greatly opposed and eventually turned down. However the North Circular is now almost finished, although there has never been a policy to build it – councils have just expanded their part independently."

In the years since, Tim has been researching, promoting and lobbying for a new way of thinking in transport planning. But his message has usually fallen on deaf ears. "I've met every Minister of Transport for as long as I can remember, but mostly to no avail – the issue has always been politically explosive and no-one would grasp the nettle."

But in the 90s things are changing. Suddenly his views are being listened to.

In March 94, The

Guardian reported, "Environment Secretary, John Gummer issued planning guidance for the first time jointly with the Department of Transport which proposed providing less parking and improving public transport as part of a strategy for reducing car use. Tim Pharoah... has been commissioned to write a guide for the Department of the Environment on ways to do this."

Tim comments, "Change in public opinion and awareness of the pollution and damage caused by road building has made transport a political issue. At long last I am now involved in policy making. It is great to have my views acknowledged by Government."

He has also been invited to join a steering committee to study ways in which town and transport planners could become more integrated in their work.

You might wonder how Tim himself gets about – does he practice what he preaches? "I come to work on my bike... I have to say that don't I? But it's true! I don't get much access to our car anyway – my wife usually has it!" He does use the car, however, to carry his double bass. Jazz is a great love of Tim's and he plays regularly in a 16 piece big band. "Over the years, in various formations,

I've played in most pubs in London." And if he's not playing jazz he's listening to it.

He also loves travelling, but for a purpose. "My family decide the holiday destinations but I always seem to end up taking a couple of days for a few meetings – the increase in international networking is one of the most exciting developments in recent years. Where previously UK planners were saying 'We're different from them', they are now realising we have a lot to learn from abroad."

Looking to the future,

Tim's greatest wish would be a society where living without the car was a serious option. "It really is possible!" he stresses.