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TGRG page

TGRG Annual Report, 2002

The TGRG approached 2002 as a year of consolidation, with the Group focusing on the delivery of a range of projects begun in earlier years as part of its strategic agenda. A successful AGM in Belfast in early January confirmed changes to the Group's Executive, with Dr. Jon Shaw taking over as Chair, Dr. Iain Docherty as Secretary and Prof. Brian Graham as Treasurer. As Secretary, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues in the TGRG for their efforts in advancing the Group's portfolio of activities over the year.

One of the key aspirations of the new TGRG Executive was to reaffirm their desire to see the Group's international links enhanced. For the second year running, therefore, one of the TGRG's officers travelled to Germany to participate in the Annual Meeting of our sister organisation, the Arbeitskreisverkehr of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geographie. Addressing the conference theme of mobility in major conurbations, Iain Docherty presented a paper to the meeting on the recent progress in regenerating urban transport networks in the UK, which was later published as part of the AK Verkehr's conference book.

Although the conference highlighted the historic differences in levels of urban transport investment between the two countries, many common themes emerged during the debates between participants. The difficulty in maintaining the momentum in investment programmes, and the scepticism with which transport users and the electorate at large view new fiscal mechanisms designed to expand the funding available for transport improvements were held to be problematic across Europe. Timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Munich urban rapid transit system, one of the conference hosts, Thomas Mager of S-Bahn Munchen, gave a fascinating insight into the challenges faced in expanding a major urban transport network under severe pressure from heavy demand. Other speakers compared the problems and prospects of city transport systems across Germany and Europe as they seek to address differing urban contexts, ranging from entrenched urban decline to rapid commercial and population expansion and accompanying congestion. With links to our German colleagues now well established, it is hoped that exchange visits such as this will become a regular feature of our research collaboration.

In the spring of 2002, Group members Jon Shaw, Richard Knowles and Brian Graham travelled to Los Angeles to attend the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG). At the conference, Jon Shaw co-convened a session with Shih-Lung Shaw, Chair of the AAG's Transport Specialty Group on recent developments in British and American transport geography. As with our German colleagues, this session provided an ideal opportunity to develop international comparative research agendas in transport geography, which it is hoped will be extended in future. In particular, it is hoped to increase the number of published outputs emanating from these and other international conference sessions.

The main focus of the Group's activities in 2002 was, however, the submission of the manuscript of its new book, *A New Deal for Transport? The UK's struggle with the sustainable transport agenda*. The book develops the themes discussed at the *Prospects for Transport in the New Parliament* conference convened by the Group in September 2001. With a range of innovative chapters providing comprehensive coverage of contemporary British transport policy, the new book—due to be published in September 2003 as part of the RGS-IBG's new research book series—will cement the TGRG's role in facilitating and advancing the transport policy debate in the UK. It has already been extremely well received by referees, and it is hoped that the book will be seen as a milestone text in the developing analysis of Britain's difficult experiences in implementing more sustainable transport policies.

The timing of the publication of *A New Deal for Transport?* and the Group's focus on developing its international links provides exciting opportunities for showcasing transport geography at the new-style RGS-IBG conference to be held in London in September 2003. The bringing together of colleagues from around the world to discuss theoretical and applied issues in transport geography, coupled with the professional, media and public interest in the new conference format, will help the Group enhance its profile as a respected focus for the exchange of research between the academic

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and professional transport communities in the UK and abroad.

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