BRIEFING:

Infrastructure Investment Plan debate

Parliamentary Debate: Thursday 15 December 2011, 14:55

Joint briefing from Friends of the Earth Scotland, Sustrans Scotland and Transform Scotland

1 Summary

- The Plan is completely lacking in detail about the low-carbon investment required for the transport sector.
- The Plan concentrates on expensive mega-projects that typically necessitate bringing in overseas construction companies. A greater focus on small-scale, local projects for which Scottish companies could tender would be of greater benefit to the Scottish economy.
- While there is promise of significant rail investment, including an upgrade to the Highland main line, we are concerned that this is being given secondary priority to new road-building.
- By pouring billions into new roads, the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan fails to fund the urgent investment needed to cut carbon emissions and create a genuinely sustainable economy.

2 Key points

2.1 Instead of focussing on reducing emissions, the Plan sets out a £6 billion road-building programme. This would be the largest since the Thatcher Government of the 1980s, sucking investment away from much needed sustainable measures such as public transport, walking and cycling.

2.2 While the proposed plans for investing in the Scottish rail network are commendable, it's unfortunate that many of these are not scheduled to commence until *after* the A9 dualling project. While there may be a case for enhancements on certain sections of the A9 to improve safety, the key intervention that Scottish Ministers could deliver swiftly would be the installation of average speed cameras along its entire length. These have a proven track record of reducing accidents on once notorious stretches of roads such as the A77.

2.3 Worryingly, while the Plan is very specific about the cost for expensive infrastructure projects (road and rail), it is almost completely lacking in detail about 'Low Carbon Transport' measures. These measures are costed in detail in the Scottish Government's own plans to meet its climate targets (the 'Report on Proposals and Policies' (RPP)) but are omitted from the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

3 Conclusion

3.1 While a long-term investment plan for transport is necessary, we are not persuaded that this plan, nor the Government's current spending priorities, will deliver on our legal commitments to reduce carbon emissions. In the Budget debates over the next two months, Scottish Ministers must give far higher priority to the local, small-scale infrastructure investment that can not only reduce emissions but support the Scottish economy.

Friends of the Earth Scotland contact
Francis Stuart, Parliamentary Officer: 0131 243 2701 or 07989 734827
fstuart@foe-scotland.org.uk
www.foe-scotland.org.uk

Transform Scotland contact
Colin Howden, Director, Transform Scotland
0131 243 2691 or 07956 394121
colin.howden@transformscotland.org.uk
www.transformscotland.org.uk