



Finance Committee call for evidence on the draft budget 2014-15¹

Transform Scotland evidence paper

23 August 2013

1 About Transform Scotland

- 1.1 Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport, and freight by rail or sea. We are a membership organisation bringing together rail, bus and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation organisations; local environment and transport campaign groups; and individual supporters.

2 Scope of our response

- 2.1 Given the scope of our organisation's activity, our comments are principally restricted to the following National Indicators:

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport
- Reduce Scotland's carbon footprint.

3 Call for Evidence questions - our views

Q1: *The progress being made by the Scottish Government in meeting its 16 national outcomes as demonstrated by the 50 national indicators, and its 11 purpose targets*

Q2: *The progress being made in relation to any specific indicator or target*

- 3.1 The Scottish Government's current expenditure priorities are not well-directed in terms of any of the National Indicators listed above:
- **Traffic congestion:** Over the past five years, spending on roads has increased by almost 40%.² The transport literature clearly shows that construction of new roads will as a rule generate new, higher levels of traffic.
 - **Increasing the modal share for sustainable transport:** Over the past few years, expenditure on the sustainable transport modes (walk, cycle, bus, rail, ferry) has remained largely unchanged. Given the emphasis on spending on new roads, it is unsurprising that the use of these modes is not significantly increasing (and in the case of buses, the largest public transport mode, decreasing).
 - **Reducing climate emissions:** The Government has missed its first two annual targets under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Transport is a significant contributor to climate emissions, being the second-largest sector for emissions.
- 3.2 We will be submitting detailed evidence on the transport elements of the Draft Budget to the ICI Committee. However, we believe that the Scottish Government's expenditure plans should focus public expenditure on assisting investment by small-scale, local, Scottish companies and public bodies:

- **Making road maintenance the focus of the Government's roads policy would have a greater impact in supporting Scottish companies and public bodies.** Tackling the road maintenance backlog rather than building new roads would (i) Provide employment for the Scottish construction industry and local authorities' Direct Labour Organisations; (ii) Support Scottish local authority finances rather than the profits of foreign construction companies; (iii) Spread investment across Scotland; (iv) Would not generate new road traffic and hence would make a contribution to reducing climate emissions; and (v) Would benefit pedestrians, cyclists and bus users as well as private vehicle users.
- **Increased investment in active travel infrastructure would benefit Scottish suppliers** as such investment (e.g. paths for cyclists and walkers) is typically built by small civil engineering contractors and local authorities, with the materials used often sourced locally. This would not only boost local economies and support local jobs but would also improve health and save emissions. We would draw the Committee's attention to the evidence submitted by Sustrans Scotland to the ICI Committee in its consideration of Scottish Budget 2012-13.³ This lists the variety of Scottish organisations (civil engineering contractors, stewardship/maintenance contractors, Direct Labour Organisations and other suppliers) spread across all of Scotland supported by Sustrans' work in creating active travel infrastructure. Given the scale of the annual transport budget (c. £2 billion), there should be ample opportunity to increase investment in active travel from its current level (c. £20m p.a.) to around £40m p.a.
- **The establishment of Scotland as a centre of excellence in sustainable technology for public transport.** Scotland doesn't make cars — but we do make buses. Scotland has Britain's largest bus manufacturer in Falkirk-based Alexander Dennis Limited, and also features two of the world's largest public transport operators in FirstGroup and Stagecoach. The Scottish Government's Low Carbon Vehicles (LCVs) policy should build on this home-grown experience and take the lead in developing sustainable automotive technology for all forms of public transport: buses, trams, trains and ferries. In order to give a specific boost to the uptake of low-carbon bus technology, the Government should put in place a programme to upgrade the whole of Scotland's bus fleet (over 4,000 buses) to low-carbon technology through a significant expansion of the *Scottish Greener Bus Fund* (which has so far provided for around 70 low-carbon buses).

Q3: *Whether the national indicators and purpose targets are an effective means of measuring the performance of government*

- 3.3 We welcome the approach taken by the NPF because we believe in identifying desired outcomes as a way of focussing activity. The NPF therefore *should* have a significant impact on the spending decisions if truly applied. However, we do not believe that this happens. To take one example, the National Indicator 'Reduce traffic congestion' leads to the identification of several measures that could help achieve this, such as the introduction of demand management measures and/or a switch of investment into sustainable transport. Yet this is not seen in practice — which raises the question as to how effectively the NPF is being used in practice to guide investment decisions.

Q4: *Whether there are additional indicators or targets which should be included to measure performance*

Q5: *The data used to measure any of these indicators or targets*

- 3.4 We favour the replacement of the 'Reduce traffic congestion' indicator with 'Road traffic levels'. We consider the latter to be a more meaningful measure of progress; with respect to Q5, it also has better data availability.

Q6: *The linkage between performance information and the Scottish Government's spending priorities*

- 3.5 See our answer to Q1 / Q2.

Q7: *Whether there is evidence of specific spending decisions resulting from changes to the performance information within Scotland Performs*

3.6 We are not aware of any such changes. For example, we would have expected the failure of the Scottish Government to meet its first annual target under the *Climate Change Scotland (Act) 2009* to lead it to rebalance expenditure in favour of measures that would reduce climate emissions from the transport sector (the second largest source of emissions). However, the Scottish Government failed to do this in its Draft Budget for 2013-14.

Q8: *How should Scotland Performs be utilised to inform policy development and spending decisions*

3.7 We would welcome a more clear explanation with the Draft Budget document of how changes in Scottish Government expenditure plans are intended as interventions to change trends in the National Indicators.

Q9: *Is there a need for Scotland Performs to have a statutory basis*

3.8 We have no settled view on this point. However, we can see that there might be merit in this approach

Q10: *Is there a need for wider public consultation in setting performance outcomes and indicators*

3.9 Yes, we would welcome this. We have at no point been consulted by the Scottish Government on Scotland Performs.

Q11: *Whether future spending decisions should continue to be shaped by the NPF, and if so how that should happen within government.*

3.10 See our answer to Q8.

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References

¹ See <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EconomyEnergyandTourismCommittee/Inquiries/Draft_budget_2014-15_Call_for_evidence.pdf>.

² See p.158 of the 2013/14 Draft Budget.

³ Available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_InfrastructureandCapitalInvestmentCommittee/General%20Documents/Written_evidence_from_Sustrans.pdf>.

Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns. Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

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