



‘The Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2011-12 and the Scottish Spending Review’

Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry¹

Evidence paper from Transform Scotland

Tuesday 16th November 2010

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 Introduction

- 2.1 We welcome the opportunity to present our evidence for the Committee’s attention. As our organisation’s interest is in the promotion of sustainable transport, our comments are limited to matters pertaining to transport. As such, we will only submit evidence in response to a selection of the questions posed.
- 2.2 As this evidence paper is being submitted before the publication of the Scottish Spending Review, in line with the deadline set by the Committee, we may submit a revised evidence paper subsequent to the publication of the Spending Review.

3 “Priorities: What should the Scottish Government’s priorities be in terms of the local government portfolio?”

- 3.1 We would identify two vital Scottish Government commitments which it will not be able to deliver upon without active leadership from local government:
- Meeting climate change commitments under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
 - Improving public health through the greater use of the active travel modes
- 3.2 As such, the Scottish Government must assist local government in meeting these policy imperatives – but also intervene as and when local government fails to play its role in delivering on these imperatives.

3.3 Climate change commitments

- 3.3.1 The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires a 42% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, and an 80% reduction by 2050. As such, this will require a major realignment of public expenditure in favour of measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and away from those that create additional emissions. The Scottish Government has estimated an £8 billion additional spend will be required over the next decade, and it is expected for the government to furnish details of this within its forthcoming *Report on Policies and Proposals*.²

3.4 Public health imperatives

- 3.4.1 There is a vast literature on the public health benefits of active travel.³ The economic benefits of active travel, however, are often neglected. As such, we would like to highlight research by the Transform Scotland Trust which, using a World Health Organisation methodology, analysed the impact of a shift to continental European levels of cycling in terms of health care costs avoided: it found that a 13% modal shift to cycling would result in an annual benefit of £1-2 billion to the Scottish economy.⁴
- 3.4.2 The Scottish Government has set an objective for 10% of all trips to be made by bike by 2020.⁵ The government's ambition for a five-fold increase in levels of cycle use within a decade is very welcome – however, its ambition will only be met if government, local and national, provides realistic levels of funding for high quality cycle infrastructure.

4 “Local authority budgets: What should local authorities’ priorities be and which – if any – services should be protected?”

- 4.1 We consider that local authorities should protect spending for measures which deliver on the priorities set out at §3.1:
- Measures that reduce climate change emissions
 - Measures that improve public health through the greater use of active travel

4.2 Prioritising investment in measures that reduce climate change emissions

- 4.2.1 In order to meet this challenge, the most effective interventions in financial terms will be those which require least in the way of expensive infrastructure – for example, the widespread introduction of travel planning, the introduction or increase in parking charges, reductions in road speeds, and introduction of measures to improve the quality of bus services (such as quality contracts or statutory partnerships).
- 4.2.2 The report *Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impacts*, published by the Scottish Government in August 2009, supports measures such as these in a series of Marginal Abatement Cost Curves, which analyse a variety of interventions for effectiveness in terms of abatement of climate change emissions.⁶ Clearly, in order to reduce emissions from transport during a period of budget restrictions, these are the measures which should be focused on and spending in these areas should be protected, and indeed increased.

4.3 Prioritising investment in measures that enhance public health

- 4.3.1 The Parliament's TICC Committee has also called for a major increase in funding for active travel (walking and cycling). However, it said that the Government's ambitions for cycling (see §3.4.2, above) will be “meaningless” if this investment is not made available.⁷
- 4.3.2 Unfortunately, the available evidence suggests that levels of investment in cycling have fallen since the implementation of the Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities.⁸
- 4.3.3 Recent research published by the Transform Scotland Trust and Sustrans Scotland⁹ found that the continental European towns and cities that have been successful in delivering high rates of active travel had in all cases a long term plan for investment at the local level, in not only improving provision, but also in popularising walking and cycling as a way to travel.
- 4.3.4 Also required was a greater level of leadership from local politicians in championing investment in local active travel infrastructure. In order to deliver against public health and obesity targets, it is essential that local government moves to levels of spending on walking and cycling, the most healthy and sustainable forms of transport, closer to those found in other European countries.

5 “Local authority budgets: Should local authorities introduce new charges or increase existing charges for services?”

5.1 We note the recommendation from the Independent Budget Review:¹⁰

“The Panel suggests that the Scottish Government should consider the feasibility of adopting road user charging as a means to both better managing the use of existing transport networks and financing improvements to those networks.”

5.2 While we support this recommendation, we would note that the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 already provides for local authorities to implement road user charging schemes.¹¹ Unfortunately, only one Scottish local authority¹² has attempted to utilise the legislation.

5.3 In the simplest terms, road user charging has clear benefits as a policy as, firstly, it is based on the polluter pays principle, and secondly, it is a revenue-raising measure.¹³ Local authorities should be actively investigating the implementation of road user charging as a means not only to deliver sustainable transport but also as a revenue-raising measure focussed on the ‘user pays’ principle.

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¹ <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/lgc/inquiries/ScotBudget11-12/call.htm>>.

² Publication of the “RPP” is expected this week. See <<http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/10/sep/briefing-forthcoming-report-policies-and-proposals>> for Stop Climate Chaos Scotland advance briefing on the RPP>

³ See Appendix 1 of the joint Sustrans Scotland / Transform Scotland evidence to the Parliament's active travel inquiry for a summary – see <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=216>>. This also sets out further evidence on the economic, social justice, environment, and quality of life benefits of active travel.

⁴ Transform Scotland Trust (2008): *Towards a Healthier Economy* – <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=108>>.

⁵ Cycle Action Plan for Scotland – <<http://www.cyclingactionplanforscotland.org/>> and <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/06/25110936>>.

⁶ See <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/26141950/0>>.

⁷ The report of the Parliament's transport committee 'Inquiry into Active Travel' concluded that "active travel has huge potential to benefit the health of the people of Scotland as well as contributing to meeting Scotland's ambitious climate change targets" but that this won't be achieved without "ambitious increases in resources" and "stronger, more effective and sustained leadership" from the Scottish Government. Specifically on cycling, the report concluded that the Scottish Government's target to get 10% of all journeys to be made by bike by 2020 (up from 2% currently) "will be meaningless if the Scottish Government fails to match its stated ambition with a realistic level of funding." See section 234-5 of the inquiry report <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/ticc/reports-10/trr10-04.htm>>. The joint Sustrans Scotland / Transform Scotland evidence to the Parliament's active travel inquiry is available at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=216>>.

⁸ Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, recently reported that Scottish Government on cycling has fallen within the last year to a new low level of 0.7% of all transport expenditure. See 'Spokes 14th Annual Cycle Funding Survey' in Spokes Bulletin 107 - <<http://www.spokes.org.uk/>>. See also SPICe briefing *Cycling in Scotland: Update 2010* <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-10/SB10-62.pdf>>.

⁹ See <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets.aspx>>.

¹⁰ See p.135 of <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/919/0102410.pdf>>.

¹¹ See <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2001/2/contents>>.

¹² The City of Edinburgh Council in its Integrated Transport Initiative of 2004 – see, e.g., <<http://www.ititime.com/>>.

¹³ We would be happy to supply the Committee with further evidence on road user charging upon request.

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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