

# Active travel inquiry

## Joint evidence paper to TICC Committee inquiry

Sustrans Scotland & Transform Scotland,  
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## 1 Our vision for active travel in Scotland

- 1.1 We want to see a national strategic programme of investment in the most sustainable forms of transport – walking and cycling – so that they can play a full part in steering transport on to a more sustainable course.
- 1.2 These ‘active travel’ modes have the potential to make a major contribution to meeting targets for congestion alleviation, public health, social justice and the environment, as well as contributing to the Government’s goal of ‘sustainable economic growth’ (see Appendix 1 for some of the key ‘benefits’ of active travel).
- 1.3 In particular, walking and cycling can make a major contribution towards tackling Scotland’s obesity crisis. The Danes and the Dutch have cycle journey shares of 20-25%, which puts Scotland’s 1% to shame<sup>1</sup> – and it is surely not accidental that these countries also have obesity levels which are less than half of Scotland’s.<sup>2</sup> Matching conditions in the best countries in continental Europe would save the Scottish economy up to £2 billion a year in health care costs. It would turn our towns and cities into pleasant, enjoyable spaces to spend time – and money – in, and enable rural populations to travel between communities more easily. It would benefit those in deprived areas the most, but would also boost tourism, cut congestion and improve quality of life for the whole country. Our natural environment would also benefit hugely, while a shift from individualised motorised transport towards more active travel would play a major role in reducing our climate change emissions and oil dependency.
- 1.4 We welcome the Scottish Government’s aspirations for active travel<sup>3</sup> – but this is not as yet being backed up with the levels of financial support necessary to achieve the Government’s ambitions.<sup>4</sup> The high rates of cycling observed in comparator countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark did not occur by aspiration alone: they came about because of sustained investment programmes over many years.<sup>5</sup> With around 99% of Scotland’s transport budget devoted to motorised transport, it is not surprising that rates of walking and cycling remain so stubbornly low. We believe it imperative that action be taken to correct this misallocation of scarce public resources.

## 2 Constraints on increases in active travel

Why is it that even with a vast set of policies supportive of active travel,<sup>6</sup> and widespread recognition of the benefits that would result from a shift to these modes, that the modal share of cycling remains at 1% and 28% of trips less than 2km – many of which would be walkable – are still being driven?<sup>7</sup> We believe that three factors combine to stop existing policy from becoming practice.

### 2.1 Funding

- 2.1.1 Designated funding for active travel in Scotland is currently less than 1% of the Scottish Government’s transport budget.<sup>8</sup> Most of the transport budget is allocated towards motorised transport on long linear journeys (a minority of trips) rather than short and local journeys (the majority of all transport trips).<sup>9</sup> Such spending encourages the perception that transport planning and infrastructure development should be focused principally on travelling far, fast and often.
- 2.1.2 The Scottish Government’s own policies place walking and cycling at the top of the transport hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> However, current investment levels lead us to believe that this hierarchy is not taken seriously by

government when decisions are taken regarding the distribution of transport expenditure. Focusing investments on motorised transport often inadvertently worsens conditions for walking and cycling. By shifting investment and practice from motorised-focused transport to active travel, Scotland can make a significant contribution towards better public health and also save billions of pounds in future health care costs.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 Targeting

- 2.2.1 Of the 45 National Indicators that influence the content of the Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) signed between Central Government and Local Authorities, only one is clearly linked to active travel<sup>12</sup> and it does not set any measurable target.
- 2.2.2 Of the 32 SOAs, 81% have an aim to increase walking and cycling, yet only 53% set a target for such an increase and do not clarify what the process of measuring the observance of the target will be. In addition, 46% of SOAs set a target to reduce childhood obesity but only 40% set a target to increase walking and cycling to school.<sup>13</sup> Again, both targets have no clear assessment process.
- 2.2.3 Without meaningful targets and assessment, all the Government's policies reinforcing the need to prioritise active travel are rendered 'advice' rather than imperatives. Without targets to work towards and without a methodology to assess performance, local authorities can relegate active travel an 'optional extra' rather than a central strand of their work.

## 2.3 Planning

- 2.3.1 Travelling actively is made easier and relevant where paths, lanes and other facilities are well planned and connected; roads and crossings are safe and convenient for pedestrians and cyclists; street furniture such as benches, planters and shelters provide a pleasant and inviting environment for pedestrians; cycle parking is provided at origins and destinations, and all facilities are integrated into a seamless journey – to school, work, shops and recreation.
- 2.3.2 NPF2 and SPP17 are the two key policies in Scotland for transport and planning. While both have good things to say on active travel, new infrastructure is regularly planned in an 'active travel vacuum', with limited or poor provisions for walking and cycling, and with no regard for how people might travel actively to and from the development. As a consequence, key infrastructure projects, such as the re-opening of the Airdrie to Bathgate railway line, have ignored the potential of people travelling actively to points along the route.<sup>14</sup>

## 3 Conclusions

- 3.1 Given that two-thirds of all transport trips are less than five miles in length, and 40% less than two miles in length,<sup>15</sup> the active travel modes provide a genuine opportunity for modal shift for large numbers of short car journeys.
- 3.2 However, without meaningful targets and in the absence of leadership from the central government, local authorities will continue to place active travel at the margins of their strategies.
- 3.3 A planning system that only plans to transport people through resource-depleting modes will not address the rising carbon emissions from the transport sector, and will not contribute to meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.
- 3.4 If Scotland is to deliver the policies to reduce carbon emissions, improve public health and change the quality of life of its citizens, it has to recognise that active travel has a vital contribution to make.
- 3.5 Dedicating 99% of the transport budget to resource-depleting, inactive modes compromises our ability to combat climate change, improve public health, and deliver sustainable economic growth.

## 4 Key Recommendations

### 4.1 Funding

- 4.1.1 During the course of the next Scottish Government spending review (for the period 2011-2014), there should be a programmed increase in the funds made available to the Government's Sustainable Transport Team, so that by the end of that spending review period 10% of the total transport budget is devoted to active travel. This recommendation is in accordance with the recommendation of the Association of Directors of Public Health in their document *Take Action on Active Travel*,<sup>16</sup> to which both of our organisations are signatories.
- 4.1.2 As part of the above, funding should allow the retention of the ring-fenced Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets (CWSS) budget (with its application better controlled by the STT), and the reintroduction of ring-fenced funding for School Travel Coordinators.

### 4.2 Targeting

- 4.2.1 Set higher and more measurable targets for greater modal shifts towards walking and cycling as part of SOAs, policies and travel planning initiatives at all of Scotland's institutions.

### 4.3 Planning

- 4.3.1 Ensure that transport planning recognises that congestion is not the only important transport cost in urban areas<sup>17</sup> and that land use planning and transport policies focus on equitable access, shorter distances and reductions in the need to travel, particularly for longer distances.<sup>18</sup>
- 4.3.2 Address skills shortages in transport, land use planning and engineering with regards to planning, design and delivery of high quality, cohesive, connective and integrated provisions for walking and cycling.
- 4.3.3 Make 20mph the default speed limit in urban areas, enforce traffic law to tackle poor driving behaviour towards more vulnerable roadway users, and raise awareness of the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. New developments should ensure that they have good walking, cycling and public transport links and that they have adequate local shops and facilities.

### 4.4 Delivery

- 4.4.1 Learning lessons from abroad and from within the UK is vital if we are to progress active travel. The single most important lesson from 'continental best practice' cities such as Copenhagen, Malmo, Basel, Freiburg, Groningen, or the successes in the English sustainable transport towns (Worcester, Darlington and Peterborough) is that without political leadership and long-term commitment, that no single policy, or set of policies, can succeed.
- 4.4.2 Our final recommendation is therefore to create a National Active Travel Plan, which would incorporate all existing policies, forthcoming policies such as CAPS and a national strategy for walking. We recommend that such a plan be produced by the government in 2010 for delivery in the next Spending Review period (2011-2014). The plan should be managed by a National Active Travel Committee chaired by the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, with its performance observed by the Parliament's TICC Committee.
- 4.4.3 Such a plan would place active travel at the heart of transport planning, targeting, funding and delivery. Recent reports, such as that from the Institute of Mechanical Engineers recommend that only by adopting a 'war-footing' can climate change targets be met.<sup>19</sup> The above structure would show Scotland to be in the vanguard of planning for a transformation in active travel planning and delivery and assist transport to meet its climate change and public health commitments.



# Appendix 1: Summary of the benefits of an increase in active travel

There is a vast literature on the benefits of active travel, so this overview will be necessarily brief.

## i. Health

- i.i. The Scottish population's physical activity levels are very low, with 67% of women, 59% of men, 26% of boys and 37% of girls not active enough to benefit their health.<sup>20</sup> It is recognised that an inactive lifestyle has serious health effects, both in terms of disease and disability, and for mental health. A recent report from the British Heart Foundation found that 72% of parents estimate that their children are taking the recommended 60 minutes of activity a day, whilst in reality only 13% of children do.<sup>21</sup> The easiest way to take exercise is as part of the daily routine, yet just half of Scotland's children walk to school and only 1% cycle. The Association of Directors of Public Health in its report *Take Action on Active Travel* clearly set out how more active lifestyles would bring huge benefits.<sup>22</sup>
- i.ii. The Foresight report *Tackling Obesities – Future Choices*<sup>23</sup> estimates that if nothing is done to tackle obesity, it could cost the economy £5 billion by 2050. The Transform Scotland Trust report *Towards a Healthier Economy*<sup>24</sup> used a World Health Organisation methodology to analyse 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.
- i.iii. In 2008, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), issued the first national, evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity. Among its seven key recommendations the guidance states:<sup>25</sup>

*“Ensure pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport that involve physical activity are given the highest priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. (This includes people whose mobility is impaired.) Use one or more of the following methods:*

- *re-allocate road space to support physically active modes of transport (as an example, this could be achieved by widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes)*
- *restrict motor vehicle access (for example, by closing or narrowing roads to reduce capacity)*
- *introduce road-user charging schemes*
- *introduce traffic-calming schemes to restrict vehicle speeds (using signage and changes to highway design)*
- *create safe routes to schools (for example, by using traffic-calming measures near schools and by creating or improving walking and cycle routes to schools).”*

This further clearly demonstrates the need to properly evaluate transport's impact on the public's health. Scotland's equivalent of NICE, SIGN, has adopted the NICE guidance recommendations.

## ii. Economy

- ii.i. The Eddington Transport Study, a major UK Government-funded study into links between transport and the economy, concluded that *“Some of the best projects are small scale, such as walking and cycling schemes”*.<sup>26</sup>
- ii.ii. More specifically, analyses by Sustrans, carried out in conjunction with The University of Leeds, found that Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) for walking and cycling schemes can be very high (results were found in the range 15:1 to 33:1).<sup>27</sup> Active travel also plays a significant role in 'Smarter Choices' interventions (in particular school travel plans, workplace travel plans and personalised travel planning).<sup>28</sup> Programmes of Smarter Choices have been found to be effective in reducing congestion, with BCRs of 10:1 or higher.<sup>29</sup>
- ii.iii. Improving local walking and cycling facilities will also benefit tourism. According to the *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland*, mountain biking alone contributed £65m in 2007, and walking is a key activity undertaken by

49% of visitors to Scotland.<sup>30</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage estimates that visits to the outdoors by Scottish residents in 2007 contributed £3.1 billion to the economy.<sup>31</sup>

## **ii.iv. Social justice**

- ii.iv.i. There are also social justice concerns with regard to the allocation of funding. Active travel investment would be of specific benefit to those who do not have access to a car.
- ii.iv.ii. The Scottish Household Survey 2007 shows the inequalities relating to car ownership across Scotland,<sup>32</sup> despite the fact that our settlements and services seem increasingly to be designed around the car. For example, 30% of Scottish households do not have access to a car and this rises to 57% of the most deprived households. Only 28% of journeys among low income households are made by car versus 65% of journeys in high income households. People living on low incomes spend a disproportionate amount of their income funding their car use.<sup>33</sup> And while just 24% of men do not have a driver's licence, 40% of women do not.
- ii.iv.iii. Lower income households tend also to suffer more from the impacts of traffic. For example, children in the lowest socio-economic groups are four times more likely to be killed as pedestrians than children in the highest socio-economic groups. Therefore, investment in active travel will tend to help the most disadvantaged groups as well as those suffering the highest health inequalities.

## **ii.v. Environment**

- ii.v.i. The transport sector is the fastest growing contributor to climate change emissions; it currently accounts for at least 24.4% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Scotland, and most of this comes from road users. The emission reduction targets in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 are laudable, but they will not be met unless emissions from transport are tackled. A cost-effective way to do this would be to focus on those shorter journeys where walking or cycling provide a real alternative to the car. For example, according to the *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland*, in 2004/05, cars were used for 23% of all journeys under a mile and 57% of all journeys between 1-2 miles.
- ii.v.ii. The recent Scottish Government Social Research paper *Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland* demonstrated that active travel investment (including that within Smarter Choices measures) provided some of the best value in terms of carbon abatement.<sup>34</sup>
- ii.v.iii. However, the Government's road-building programme seriously undermines its environmental credentials in as much as these projects generate large new volumes of climate change emissions.<sup>35</sup> It is a sobering thought that the cost of the proposed Second Forth Road Bridge alone (£2,300 million) would pay for over a hundred years of active travel investment at current levels (£20 million per annum).

## **ii.vi. Quality of life**

- ii.vi.i. Better walking and cycling provision also makes a huge contribution to the quality of life of everyone in Scotland, in terms of improved public space, safer communities and reduced levels of air and noise pollution.
- ii.vi.ii. Countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany have the kind of active travel behaviour which the Scottish Government should hope to emulate. With cycling as the main mode of transport for a large proportion of their populations, significant health benefits have ensued. But this situation did not come about by chance. Instead, sustained investment in walking and cycling over many years has established safe off-road and on-road cycling routes and pedestrianised areas which provide a real choice for people to use active travel modes.

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## Appendix 2: References

- 1 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0087945.pdf> reports cycling modal share as 1.0% in 2008 (see p.16, Table 1). However, walking remains the second most common mode of transport, with a 22% modal share.
- 2 ScotPHO (2007) *Obesity in Scotland: An epidemiology briefing* <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=4048&SID=3489> reports Scottish adult obesity as 25.5%. Bassett et al. (2008) *Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North America, and Australia* <http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/JPAH08.pdf> reports obesity levels in Denmark and The Netherlands as 12.2% and 8.1% respectively.
- 3 We note in particular the introduction to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland consultation, the transport minister Stewart Stevenson MSP sets out the aspiration that “[b]y 2020, 10% of all journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike.” – Scottish Government (2009): *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland consultation* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/273788/0081826.pdf>.
- 4 We note the November 2008 report of the TICC Committee to the Finance Committee on the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2009-10. The TICC Committee recommended that there was a “strong case” for additional funding for walking and cycling measures. See <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/finance/reports-08/fir08-07-vol1.htm>.
- 5 See, for example, <http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/irresistible.pdf>.
- 6 Scottish Government (2003): *Let’s make Scotland more active: a strategy for physical activity* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/02/16324/17895>; Scottish Government (2007): *Better Health, Better Care: Action Plan* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11103453/0>; Scottish Government (2006): *Scotland’s National Transport Strategy* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/04104414/0>; Scottish Government (2008): *Good Places, Better Health* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/11090318/0>.
- 7 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0087945.pdf>.
- 8 Calculations from Spokes: the Lothian Cycle Campaign, as published in 2009. Spokes’ survey has been described by SPICe as “The most comprehensive analysis of funding for Scottish cycling projects from all sources” – SPICe (2009) *Cycling in Scotland* – <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/research/briefings-09/SB09-48.pdf>.
- 9 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0087945.pdf> reports that “[t]he majority of journeys were less than 5 km. In 2007/2008, the average (mean) journey distance was 10 km, compared to a median of only 3 km. This showed that half of all journeys were 3km or less; in fact 40% were less than 2 km. Over half (53%) of all driver journeys were less than 5 km, with 28% less than 2km.”
- 10 For example, the final version of NPF2 repeatedly calls for the need for modal shift from the private car to the sustainable transport modes – Scottish Government (2009): *National Planning Framework 2* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/278232/0083591.pdf>.
- 11 Transform Scotland Trust (2008), *Towards a Healthier Economy* – <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=108>.
- 12 The National Indicator ‘Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport’ (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/indicators/publicTransport>), while providing a useful measure of modal share for all sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling, public transport), is not informative regarding the share of active travel within that total.
- 13 Reference available from Sustrans Scotland on request.
- 14 35% of the population of West Lothian lives within three miles of the line, yet no traffic-free paths, shared footways or segregated highways are planned.
- 15 Scottish Executive (2007) *Travel by Scottish Residents: some National Travel Survey results for 2004/2005 and earlier years* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/01/12092407/10>.
- 16 Association of Directors of Public Health (2008): *Take Action on Active Travel* – <http://www.adph.org.uk/news.php>. This report has received the support of over 100 organisations from across the UK, including both of our organisations. Supporters of the report include such groups as the Institute of Highway Engineers, Royal Institute of British Architects, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Royal College of Physicians, Sustainable Development Commission and many other prestigious and professional bodies central to public health, environment and transport policy and practice.
- 17 Other major costs related to poor urban transport planning and implementation are related to physical inactivity, noise and air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. As such these wider costs to society ought to be consistently incorporated in the development and assessment of any transport scheme from start to finish.
- 18 This would require greater emphasis on planning regulations and incentives for example for more mixed use/compact developments and in-fill developments (and greater disincentives for schemes that do not incorporate such plans). A vibrant and sustainable economy relies on access to jobs and services, so encouraging planning that provides for shorter distances and better access for everybody without the need to own and operate a car is vital for sustainable economic growth.
- 19 Institute of Mechanical Engineers (2009): *Climate Change: have we lost the battle?* – <http://www.imeche.org/media/press/MAGpressrelease>.
- 20 Scottish Government National Physical Activity Strategy website - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/Introduction>. Accessed on 23/11/09.
- 21 British Heart Foundation Scotland (2009): *Couch Kids* – [http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/view\\_publication.aspx?ps=1001087](http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/view_publication.aspx?ps=1001087).
- 22 Association of Directors of Public Health (2008): *Take Action on Active Travel* – <http://www.adph.org.uk/news.php>.

- <sup>23</sup> Foresight Programme (2007): *Tackling Obesities: Future Choices* – <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProjects/Obesity/Obesity.asp>.
- <sup>24</sup> Transform Scotland Trust (2008): *Towards a Healthier Economy* – <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=108>.
- <sup>25</sup> National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008): *Physical activity and the environment* – <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH8/Guidance/pdf/English>.
- <sup>26</sup> HMSO (2006): *The Eddington Transport Study* – <http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/187604/206711/executivesummary.pdf>.
- <sup>27</sup> Sustrans website – <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/resources/research-and-monitoring/economic-appraisal-of-cycling-and-walking-schemes>. Accessed on 23/11/09.
- <sup>28</sup> The Smarter Choices measures have been defined by the DfT as: (i) workplace travel plans, (ii) school travel plans, (iii) personalised travel plans, (iv) public transport information, (v) travel awareness campaigns, (vi) car clubs, (vii) car sharing schemes, (viii) teleworking, (ix) teleconferencing, and (x) home shopping. See Transform Scotland Trust (2009) *Smarter Ways Forward* – <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/smarter-ways-forward.aspx>.
- <sup>29</sup> Cairns, Sloman, Newson, Anable, Kirkbride & Goodwin (2004) *Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel: the final report of the research project 'The influence of soft factor interventions on travel demand'* – <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/ctwwt/>.
- <sup>30</sup> Visit Scotland (2008): *Tourism in Scotland 2007* – [http://www.visitscotland.org/tourism\\_in\\_scotland\\_2007-2.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/tourism_in_scotland_2007-2.pdf).
- <sup>31</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage (2009): *Scottish Recreation Survey 2007* – [http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/321.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/321.pdf).
- <sup>32</sup> Scottish Government (2009): *Scottish Household Survey 2007-8* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/283301/0085783.pdf>.
- <sup>33</sup> Sustrans Cymru (2008): *Transport and social justice* – [http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/Info%20sheets/FF46\\_info%20sheet.pdf](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/Info%20sheets/FF46_info%20sheet.pdf).
- <sup>34</sup> Atkins & The University of Aberdeen (2009): *Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland: Assessment of Policy Options* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/282791/0085548.pdf>.
- <sup>35</sup> Scottish Government (2009): *Carbon Account for Transport* – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/27143705/0>.