

**BRIEFING:****Active Travel**

Debate on the TICC Committee's Active Travel Inquiry report - Wednesday 9th June 2010

**1 Key points**

- 1.1 This briefing has been prepared by the above organisations and is a summary of the key points from their responses to the TICC Committee's inquiry.
- 1.2 We welcome the findings of the TICC Committee's inquiry into active travel. The report is a clear endorsement of the role active travel has to play in allowing people to choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and wellbeing. In particular, we welcome the inquiry's conclusion 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.
- 1.3 Specifically on cycling, the report concludes 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.*" We welcome the forthcoming Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) – but see this as only the start in delivering healthy, sustainable transport in Scotland.
- 1.4 Specifically on walking, a quarter of all journeys are already made on foot, and walking is the most common mode of transport for the over-80s and under-20s. We need to re-design our streets and slow traffic speeds to give greater priority to the elderly and children. We welcome the Inquiry's call for: "*specific proposals to encourage the wider adoption of 20mph speed limits in appropriate locations in order to promote active travel*".

**2 The benefits of active travel**

- 2.1 Given that *two-thirds of all transport trips are less than five miles in length*, and 40% less than two miles in length,<sup>1</sup> the active travel modes provide a genuine opportunity for modal shift for large numbers of short car journeys. However, without meaningful targets and in the absence of leadership from central government, local authorities will continue to place active travel at the margins of their strategies.
- 2.2 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. 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.
- 2.3 We welcome the Scottish Government's aspirations for active travel<sup>2</sup> – but this is not as yet being backed up with the levels of financial support necessary to achieve the Government's ambitions. 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>3</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.

## 3 What now needs to happen

### 3.1 Scottish Government funding

- 3.1.1 We need to see a major boost in investment in walking and cycling when the Scottish Government publishes its Spending Review later this year. If this doesn't happen then we can't see how the Scottish Government can meet its aspirations that 10% of all journeys be made by bike by 2020, to increase levels of physical activity, or to tackle the obesity epidemic. Unlike spending on major infrastructure projects, investment in walking and cycling is generally inexpensive and delivers excellent returns on investment.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.1.2 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, endorsed by over 100 national public health and other groups, in its document *Take Action on Active Travel*.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.1.3 As part of the above, funding should allow the retention of the ring-fenced Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets (CWSS) budget, the reintroduction of ring-fenced funding for School Travel Coordinators, and expansion of the successful *Smarter Choices, Smarter Places* sustainable travel town initiative.

### 3.2 The role of local authorities

- 3.2.1 Local authorities should set higher and more measurable targets for greater modal shifts towards walking and cycling as part of their Single Outcome Agreements.<sup>6</sup> 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.
- 3.2.2 Local authorities should increasingly make 20mph the speed limit on streets where we live, work and play, enforce traffic law to protect more vulnerable roadway users, and raise awareness of the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> 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>.
- <sup>2</sup> 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>.
- <sup>3</sup> See, for example, <http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/irresistible.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> For example, 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) – see <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/resources/research-and-monitoring/economic-appraisal-of-cycling-and-walking-schemes>. Active travel also plays a significant role in 'Smarter Choices' interventions (in particular school travel plans, workplace travel plans and personalised travel planning) – see <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/smarter-ways-forward.aspx>. Programmes of Smarter Choices have been found to be effective in reducing congestion, with BCRs of 10:1 or higher – see, e.g. <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/ctwwt/>.
- <sup>5</sup> 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 our own 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.
- <sup>6</sup> Of the 45 National Indicators that influence the content of the SOAs, only one is clearly linked to active travel. 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 (reference available from Sustrans Scotland on request). Again, both targets have no clear assessment process.