



Mr Colin Howden  
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Your ref:

Our ref:  
2008/0036000OR

Date:  
15 October 2008

Dear Mr Howden

## **STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW**

Thank you for your letter of 15 September 2008 to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson MSP on behalf of Friends of the Earth Scotland, the Scottish Association for Public Transport, Spokes, Sustrans Scotland, Transform Scotland and WWF Scotland regarding the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR). As this is a matter delegated to Transport Scotland, your letter has been passed to me to reply.

The STPR is examining the longer terms needs of Scotland's nationally strategic transport network and will allow Ministers to develop a transport investment plan for the period 2012 to 2022. It is intended that this plan will help towards achieving the Government's purpose of creating a more successful country through increasing sustainable economic growth and making a significant contribution towards the National Transport Strategy. The Review will identify gaps and shortfalls on the national strategic transport network, which includes trunk roads as well as the national rail network. It will be informed by a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The STPR will also aim to make a significant contribution to the three key objectives of the National Transport Strategy by letting us plan for the delivery of an efficient, integrated transport network fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Specifically, Scotland's National Transport Strategy commits transport infrastructure to deliver against the following key objectives:

- Improved journey times and connections, to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport that impact on the potential for continued and sustainable economic growth
- Reduced emissions, to tackle the issues of climate change, air quality and health improvement
- Improved quality, accessibility and affordability to give people a choice of public transport, where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car, including cycling

The STPR is currently in the process of concluding and drafting of the Summary Report has commenced. Ministers are being advised of the emerging, initial findings. Depending upon the outcome of their considerations, it is anticipated that there will be an announcement in

Parliament later in the year with an opportunity to consider the accompanying Environmental Report during the 8 week consultation period.

Your helpful comments regarding the type of investment that you wish to see arising from this Review are welcomed in this context. As I have already indicated, the STPR is primarily focusing on the trunk road and national rail network based on a tiered approach to investment, structured around the priorities of:

- maintaining and safely operating existing assets
- promoting a range of measures, including innovative solutions, that make better use of existing capacity; and
- promoting targeted infrastructure improvements where these are necessary, affordable and practicable.

This approach will make best use of limited resources, ensuring new infrastructure is identified only after other interventions have been appraised and considered. It will promote and support a more sustainable transport network by encouraging efficient use of existing resources.

It is worth reflecting that the STPR is only part of the Government's drive to improve our transport system and make Scotland a healthier and more sustainable place to live and work.

In terms of aviation growth, the Government's policy focus is to balance the economic, social and environmental impact of aviation and to ensure that aviation is meeting its external costs. They encourage airport operators to make best use of existing capacity. However, from 2012, aircraft using European airports will have their emissions included in the EU targets. Any increase in air travel, and consequently emissions, will therefore have to be met from the overall aviation cap or failing that, from another sector.

This Government already actively encourages active travel, such as walking and cycling through a number of mechanisms such as ring-fenced funding through the Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets fund. They will also continue to work with Councils and their Community Planning Partnerships to encourage greater uptake of these activities which will not only improve the health of our nation, but are more environmentally friendly than motorised forms of transport.

The Government is also funding a range of organisations through the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Project. This partnership project with COSLA will provide up to £15 million over three years to reduce car dependence; increase physical activity, reduce emissions and congestion and promote sustainable places.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely



MIKE BLOOM