



## BRIEFING:

### ***Need for greater investment in Active Travel***

Parliamentary Debate on the Finance Committee's Report on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget - Wednesday 17th December 2008, 14:30

**S3M-3100 Andrew Welsh on behalf of the Finance Committee: 7th Report 2008 (Session 3) of the Finance Committee on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2009-10**—That the Parliament notes the 7th Report 2008 (Session 3) of the Finance Committee on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2009-10 (SP Paper 179), and refers the report and its recommendations to the Scottish Government for consideration.

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 As the draft Budget currently stands, just 1% of transport investment will be spent on Active Travel (that is, walking and cycling). This figure of £20m compares poorly with the Trunk Roads budget which has increased by £134m for 2009/10. At a time when the Government has published its Scottish Climate Change Bill which will require a huge modal shift in transport use to more active modes, and our population is facing a health and obesity crisis due to inactive lifestyles, it is crucial that investment in active travel is given due importance in this Budget. Better walking and cycling provision also makes a huge contribution to the quality of life of everyone in Scotland, in terms of public realm improvements, safer communities and reduced levels of air and noise pollution.
- 1.2 We therefore call upon the Scottish Parliament to amend the Budget to increase the proportion of funding for active travel.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Budget proposes that the principal funds allocated for the enhancement of walking and cycling, 'Support for Sustainable and Active Travel' and 'Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes' remain static at £9m and £11m per annum, respectively, during the course of the Budget period.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the Government has set out plans for a large growth in spending on trunk roads and motorway budget lines.
- 2.2 In its report on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget to the Finance Committee, the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (TICC) Committee recommended that there was a "strong case" for additional funding for walking and cycling measures.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.3 The Finance Committee noted but did not accept this recommendation, referring instead to the Cabinet Secretary's evidence which had stated that additional funding was also spent on active travel through other budget lines. However, this spending has not been quantified, and *we are doubtful that it will significantly change the position of approximately only 1% of the transport budget being allocated to investment in Active Travel.*

<sup>1</sup> See <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pq=S3W-11171>>.

<sup>2</sup> See <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/finance/reports-08/fir08-07-vol1.htm>>.

2.4 Our organisations therefore urge the Scottish Parliament to amend the Scottish Government's draft Budget so that a greater share of the Budget is allocated to be spent on active travel.

### **3. The case for greater investment in Active Travel**

3.1 The transport sector currently contributes (at least) 17% of carbon emissions to Scotland's total, and this proportion is still rising. The challenging targets outlined in the Scottish Climate Change Bill are welcomed, but these have no prospect of being met unless robust action is taken to reduce levels of motorised transport. Since 39% of car journeys in Scotland are under 2 miles, and 53% under 5 miles, there is huge potential for increasing the amount of trips undertaken on foot or by bicycle. Walking and cycling should be given strategic priority, not treated as an afterthought.

3.2 There are many examples of good practice in Europe that we can look to, and these are known to the Government. In May 2008, Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson MSP said:

*"With a cycling modal share of just 1% we clearly have to do much more if we are to emulate our European neighbours who enjoy 10%-30% share".*

In October 2008, Communities Minister Stewart Maxwell MSP said:

*"Copenhagen already enjoys a [cycling] modal share of 35% and has set itself a target of 50% .. To reach our [climate] emissions target we must consider if such a [cycling modal shift] target is attainable here".*

3.3 Simply hoping that people will get out of their cars for shorter journeys is not sufficient: sustained investment programmes over many years led to Dutch and Danish cycle-journey shares of 20-25%. These countries also feature obesity levels less than half of Scotland's. Scotland needs to start its own active travel investment programme now.

3.4 It should also be remembered that one third of Scottish households do not have access to a car, and that these are predominantly households in the most deprived areas. In addition, it has been found that children in the lowest socio-economic groups are not only more likely to suffer from air pollution from traffic, but also are four times more likely to be killed as pedestrians than children in the highest socio-economic groups. Therefore, investment in active travel will help the most disadvantaged groups as well as those suffering the highest health inequalities.

3.5 Better walking and cycling provision also makes a huge contribution to the quality of life of everyone in Scotland, in terms of an improved public realm, safer communities and reduced levels of air and noise pollution.

### **4. Conclusions**

4.1 At present, the level of spending within Scotland's transport budget dedicated to non-motorised modes is not sufficient to effect any significant modal shift towards walking and cycling.

4.2 We firmly believe that the current economic recession offers an opportunity to the government to help effect a change to healthy, low carbon transport with wide-ranging benefits to the whole population and to the environment. We therefore call upon the Scottish Government to bring forward investment in active travel as an urgent priority.

4.3 Our organisations therefore urge the Scottish Parliament to amend the Scottish Government's draft Budget so that a greater share of the Budget is allocated to be spent on active travel.

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