



# ICI Committee call for evidence on Draft Budget 2013-14<sup>1</sup> Transform Scotland paper

22 October 2012

## 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 Summary of our views on the 2013-14 budget

- 2.1 We do not believe that the Scottish Government's current priorities for transport are well-directed *either* in terms of promoting sustainable economic growth *or* in terms of sustainability. The focus on large-scale transport infrastructure projects is misdirected — as the beneficiaries of the contracts that the Government issues as a result are very often *not based in Scotland*. Meanwhile, the Government's failure to get its act together on reducing climate emissions demonstrates that it is failing to deliver on sustainability.
- 2.2 Our evidence relates to all forms of sustainable transport, but includes a specific focus on active travel. We believe that the 2013-2014 budget does not address the issue of active travel sufficiently, with the additional £6 million investment in cycling being completely inadequate to allow the Government to meet its own cycle modal share target as set out in the original Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.
- 2.3 Overall, the Draft Budget is extremely disappointing for sustainable transport. As well as the inadequate funding for active travel, the Budget also fails on investment in buses and ferries, both of which fall in real terms (the former from £248.6m to £242.5m, the latter from £107.1m to £106.5m). The Budget also locks in the severe cuts to bus investment (Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)) announced in last year's Budget. It is also worrying to see further cuts to local authority budgets, which will reduce their ability to tackle the vast road maintenance backlog. Therefore, while there is money invested in cycling, the upkeep of already existing cycling and pedestrian infrastructure could be impeded.
- 2.4 While the overall transport budget increases by £68.7m in real terms (from £1,884.2m in 2012-13 to £1,952.9m in 2013-14), this extra funding is disproportionately benefiting roads spending (rising from £655.4m to £673.6m). The charts on p.158 of the budget show that in the last five years, road spending has increased by almost 40%, while most other transport spending lines have remained largely unchanged.
- 2.5 However, the increase in the Rail Services budget is welcome, and we are pleased to see increased clarity on investments for Caledonian Sleeper services, which the government has previously delayed. It is also positive to see the Draft Budget highlight the modernisation of the Glasgow Subway, which was completely omitted from last year's budget; and encouraging that there is continued reference to progressing the Borders Railway project.

### 3 Key principles for delivering sustainable transport

3.1 We believe that the Government's approach should stress three key principles:

- Give **preventative spend measures** a much higher priority in its investment decisions.
- Focus public expenditure on **assisting investment by small-scale, local, Scottish** companies and public bodies.
- Stress the benefits of **cross-cutting initiatives** in order to break down the compartmentalised nature of existing Government budgeting.

3.2 We will now illustrate these principles by some examples from the transport sector.

#### 3.3 Preventative spend measures:

- **Active travel investment would 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'. There is a vast literature on the benefits of active travel.<sup>2</sup> In particular, walking and cycling could 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>3</sup> – and it is surely not accidental that these countries also have obesity levels which are less than half of Scotland's.<sup>4</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.<sup>5</sup> It would turn our towns and cities into pleasant, enjoyable spaces to spend time — and money. 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. However, the Scottish Government's aspirations for active travel<sup>6</sup> are not as yet being backed up with the levels of investment necessary to achieve the Government's ambitions.<sup>7</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>8</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 horribly low. In order to reverse this, and so that the Government can achieve its Cycling Action Plan for Scotland target of 10% of trips by bike by 2020, there should be a programmed increase in the funds made available for active travel investment to 10% of the total transport budget. This is in accordance with the recommendations of the Association of Directors of Public Health in their document *Take Action on Active Travel*.<sup>9</sup>
- **Investment in sustainable transport would also allow the Government to meet its commitments under the *Climate Change Act (Scotland) 2009***, and hence avoid future spending on measures to tackle climate emissions. Transport is the second largest emissions sector and, crucially, the one where recent trends have continued to see increases in emissions. So it is critical that urgent action is taken to reverse trends in the transport sector. Unfortunately, the Government's Draft Budget for 2012-13 provided, at most, 6% of the funding for transport measures required by the Government's own climate change action plan (the *Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP)*).<sup>10</sup> As well as increased investment in active travel, there should be greater investment in 'Smarter Choices' measures: these are a range of small-scale, low-cost interventions (e.g. school, workplace and personal travel plans, car clubs, lift sharing, travel awareness campaigns) that have been shown to be highly cost-effective in reducing both traffic levels and greenhouse gas emissions. The RPP identifies several Smarter Choices 'Proposals'. These 'Proposals' must be written into policy in order to effectively meet the targets set out in the Scottish climate legislation. While there is considerable, albeit inconsistent, action already taking place, there is a clear need for greater support and guidance from central government to ensure a national programme of Smarter Choices investment.

### 3.4 Assisting investment by small-scale, local, Scottish companies and public bodies:

- The Scottish Government should seek to **establish Scotland as a centre of excellence in sustainable technology for public transport**. Scotland doesn't make cars — but we do make buses. Scotland has Britain's largest bus manufacturer in Falkirk-based Alexander Dennis Limited. Scotland also features two of the world's largest public transport operators in FirstGroup and Stagecoach. The Scottish Government's Low Carbon Vehicles (LCVs) policy should build on this home-grown experience and take the lead in developing sustainable automotive technology for all forms of public transport: buses, trams, trains and ferries. In order to give a specific boost to the uptake of low-carbon bus technology, the Government should put in place a programme to upgrade the whole of Scotland's bus fleet (over 4,000 buses) to low-carbon technology through a significant expansion of the *Scottish Greener Bus Fund* (which has so far provided for around 70 low-carbon buses).
- **Increased investment in active travel infrastructure would benefit Scottish suppliers** as such investment (e.g. paths for cyclists and walkers) is typically built by small civil engineering contractors and local authorities, with the materials used sourced locally. This would not only boost local economies and support local jobs but would also improve health and save emissions. We would draw the Committee's attention to the evidence submitted by Sustrans Scotland to the ICI Committee in its consideration of Scottish Budget 2012-13.<sup>11</sup> This lists the variety of Scottish organisations (civil engineering contractors, stewardship/maintenance contractors, Direct Labour Organisations and other suppliers) spread across all of Scotland supported by Sustrans' work in creating active travel infrastructure.
- **Making road maintenance rather than road-building the focus of the Government's roads policy would have a greater impact in supporting Scottish companies and public bodies**. We are not convinced by the case the Government presents regarding the benefit to the construction industry — or, rather, the benefit to the *Scottish* construction industry — of the focus on infrastructure 'mega-projects'. We note that *none* of the four companies that comprise the consortium for construction of the unnecessary and unsustainable 'Forth Replacement Crossing' project — Scotland's largest construction project — are headquartered in Scotland. Three of these companies are foreign (Dragados (Spanish), Hochtief (German) and American Bridge International (US)) whilst the fourth (Morrison Construction) is a division of an English company (Galliford Try). Should the Scottish construction industry require financial stimulus from the Scottish Government then this would be better served by the prioritisation of capital expenditure more likely to be recouped by Scottish companies rather than by companies headquartered outwith Scotland. There has been a continuing failure by Scottish Government administrations to tackle the widely-acknowledged road maintenance backlog (which Audit Scotland has reported to be over £2 billion<sup>12</sup>). Tackling the road maintenance backlog rather building new roads would (i) Provide employment for the Scottish construction industry and local authorities' Direct Labour Organisations; (ii) Support Scottish local authority finances rather than the profits of foreign construction companies; (iii) Spread investment across Scotland; (iv) Would not generate new road traffic and hence would make a contribution to reducing climate emissions; and (v) Would benefit pedestrians, cyclists and bus users as well as private vehicle users.

### 3.5 The benefits of cross-cutting initiatives:

3.5.1 The above examples, while transport initiatives (and hence mostly within the Infrastructure and Capital Investment portfolio), clearly provide opportunities for cross-cutting initiatives across Government budgeting. For example:

- Active travel investment would have clear benefits for public health — and hence there is an argument that the health budget ('**Health, Well-being and Cities**') should make greater provision, or at minimum better integration with, budgeting for transport.
- A focus on low-carbon technology in the bus industry has clear links into the **Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth** portfolio.

- A switch from new road-building to tackling the road maintenance backlog would have obvious benefits for the **Local Government** portfolio plans.

3.5.2 Whilst our preference is for re-allocation of the transport budget from its currently ill-focussed and counter-productive nature, the above examples show opportunities for greater cross-cutting budgeting across the Government's portfolios.

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## References

- 1 See <<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/54588.aspx>>.
- 2 Transform Scotland (2010) *SP Finance Committee - preventative spend inquiry evidence* (see Appendix 1 for summary of active travel benefits) <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/publications-searchresults.aspx?at=&af=lf-2f-4f-3f11&p=4&ps=10>.
- 3 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.
- 4 ScotPHO (2007) *Obesity in Scotland: An epidemiology briefing* <<http://www.scotpho.org.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=4048&slD=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.
- 5 Transform Scotland Trust (2008) *Towards a Healthier Economy*. Available at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/towards-a-healthier-economy.aspx>>
- 6 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>>.
- 7 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-voll.htm>>.
- 8 Sustrans Scotland & Transform Scotland Trust (2010) *Civilising the Streets*. This report looked at a number of comparator cities around Europe to examine why they have higher rates of active travel than are found in Scotland. The report concludes that there are a number of factors, but that expenditure as well as political commitment is necessary. See <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets.aspx>>.
- 9 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.
- 10 See our evidence to ICI Committee in October 2011 for details: <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=493>>.
- 11 Available at <[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_InfrastructureandCapitalInvestmentCommittee/General%20Documents/Written\\_evidence\\_from\\_Sustrans.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_InfrastructureandCapitalInvestmentCommittee/General%20Documents/Written_evidence_from_Sustrans.pdf)>.
- 12 See <<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/media/article.php?id=164>>.