

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING:

The Scottish Budget & Active Travel

Finance Committee Debate: Draft Budget 2013-14 — Thursday 20 December 2012

1 Key points

- 1.1 The Finance Committee's report on the Budget notes that the ICI Committee "*remains convinced that the level of public investment in sustainable and active travel is insufficient and is "concerned by the planned reduction in the 'sustainable and active travel' Budget line in 2014-15, to £19 million".*
- 1.2 The Committee recommended that "*the Scottish Government should consider further immediate adjustments to the current" indicative forecasts for 2014-15 and "redirect additional funding from other transport lines to active travel."*"¹
- 1.3 The overall expenditure on transport in the Draft Budget increases from £1,884.2m in 2012-13 to £1,952.9m in 2013-14 in real terms² — so the lack of adequate investment in active travel can clearly be attributed to the decisions of the Scottish Ministers themselves.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government needs to provide a major boost in active travel investment in the Budget. This is imperative in order for the Government to meet its own target for 10% of all journeys be made by bike by 2020, but also in order to increase levels of physical activity, tackle the obesity epidemic and health inequalities, contribute to the preventative spend agenda, and hit climate change targets.
- 1.5 Investment in active travel also makes good economic sense. Unlike spending on major infrastructure projects, investment in walking and cycling is generally inexpensive and delivers excellent returns on investment.³
- 1.6 The Scottish Government has, however, found only £3.9m of "shovel-ready projects" in the area of active travel out of its £800m "shovel-ready list".⁴ While the extra £3.9m for cycle infrastructure is welcome, it is far from sufficient.
- 1.7 A survey of Scottish local authorities currently being conducted by Ramblers Scotland has found that there is substantially more active travel projects that could commence construction within one year. The 13 local authorities that have so far responded have indicated that they could commence on 52 projects with a total investment value of £17.1m.

2 Background

- 2.1 Our organisations are keen to demonstrate to the Scottish Government how it can quickly and easily fund active travel projects at both a strategic and a local level. In 2010, the Association of Directors of Public Health issued a report which called for 10% of transport budgets at national and local level to be spent on active travel.⁵ All our organisations supported this report, but Scotland still spends less than 1% of the national transport budget this way.
- 2.2 We are in the process of drawing up an indicative list of projects from all local authorities and national park authorities. Currently we have received an outline of projects from 13 local authorities who have listed 52 schemes which are 'shovel ready' and could be implemented within one year. The total funding required for these projects is £17,165,000. They range from £25,000 to upgrade path surfacing on Great Northern Road in Aberdeen to increase usage and reduce future maintenance burdens on the council, to £1m to

develop the New Dumfries to Lockerbie cycle path which would provide an active travel link for employees of Lockerbie Creamery and commuters to Dumfries.

- 2.3 These 52 projects may individually be small in scale but together they would have a huge impact across the whole country in terms of health improvements, environmental benefits and a reduction in congestion and pollution. Walking/cycling projects are generally smaller than road projects, and are delivered by local construction firms. This means that the economic benefit from public works is spread throughout the country and into local economies, rather than going offshore to huge multi-national construction companies. In addition, local skills are often increased since training opportunities arise.
- 2.4 The government has a target in its Cycling Action Plan for Scotland of 10% of all journeys by bicycle by 2020. These projects would help to achieve this vision, as well as making a massive contribution to preventative spend measures for health and the environment and helping to deliver the RPP and reduce climate change emissions.

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References

- ¹ Finance Committee report on Draft Budget 2013-14: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/57685.aspx>
- ² Scottish Budget Draft Budget 2013-14. Table 9.02, first six rows. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00402310.pdf>
- ³ 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/assets/files/general/Economic%20appraisal%20of%20local%20walking%20and%20cycling%20routes%20-%20summary.pdf>>. 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. *Smarter Choices: Changing the Way We Travel*: <http://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/policyresearch/behaviourchange/>
- ⁴ Scottish Government news release, 25/11/12: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/11/shovelready25112012>
- ⁵ Association of Directors of Public Health (2008): *Take Action on Active Travel* – <http://www.adph.org.uk/files/ourwork/policies/Take_action_on_active_travel_2010.pdf>. 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.