

Environment, Climate Change and Land
Reform Committee debate

Tuesday 9 February 2021

Briefing from Transform Scotland

1. Key Points

- We welcome the ECCLR Committee's inquiry report on Green Recovery.
- The Government's Climate Change Plan update contains a number of welcome measures for transport (e.g. 20% traffic reduction target) but will require further strengthening (e.g. inclusion of traffic demand management measures) before it has a realistic hope of delivering deep cuts in transport emissions.
- Below we set out a number of further priorities for delivering Green Recovery in transport.

2. Priorities for delivering a Green Recovery within transport

The Scottish Government's capital expenditure priorities are grotesquely skewed in favour of high-carbon transport. The Climate Emergency demands an immediate stop to building additional road capacity. The Government's current spending priorities: (i) locks in greenhouse gas emissions by generating more car traffic; (ii) increases climate risk by destruction of carbon sinks such as woodlands, high carbon soils and wetlands; (iii) reduces resilience from climate impacts like flooding and; (iv) impacts negatively upon equalities, health, biodiversity, landscapes and productive land. As such, we welcome the ECCLR Committee's recommendation that

"transport budgets and fiscal incentives [be] targeted at reducing demand for travel by car and encouraging the use of active and sustainable modes, e.g. prioritising investment in active and sustainable travel infrastructure rather than additional road capacity." (p34)

To achieve a just, green recovery will require an urgent transformation of the transport budget, priorities, policies and governance structures on transport — and how we are connected, based on recovery to good health and the principles of *avoid, shift, improve*. These steps towards a zero emission transport vision, creating good jobs and strengthening the economy, need to happen right now:

1. AVOID: Where it is possible to avoid travel (for commuting and business), people should be supported to work at home or in a local co-working space, or by choosing to use local services and contributing to the local economy and community resilience.

Priority for action: *Invest in digital infrastructure, broadband provision and co-working hubs across Scotland, to enable choices and ensure workers have access to spaces with social connections and resources needed.*

2. SHIFT: When it is necessary to travel, the priority should be to invest in the public transport system to enable people wherever possible to choose to shift from using a car to active travel, bus or rail. We need to maximise the opportunities for active travel as an urgent priority, by increasing not just re-purposing funding. This needs to ensure that this happens in rural areas, villages and towns as well as across our cities. It needs to happen urgently to enable people to continue to feel safe to choose to walk, wheel or cycle.

Priority for action: *Financially incentivise Local Authorities to reallocate road space to prioritise active travel on a permanent basis. A key objective should be the creation of segregated cycle paths on all main arterial roads. The Scottish Government can further assist Local Authorities by overhauling the cumbersome Traffic Regulation Order process.*

Priority for action: *At this moment, not every child has a safe active route to school that allows for physical distancing. There is no specific funding directed towards providing a safe, distanced route to School and no requirement to audit or deliver it. This should be a right for every child.*

Delivering a clean, just transition from car to public transport, creating jobs and strengthening the economy should be a priority for a just, green recovery to good health. This should be delivered through a framework for action on bus and on rail by 2030. We know that if services are affordable, good quality, reliable, clean and safe people will switch mode and reap benefits to their own lives and health, as well as the wider community and planet.

Investing in bus presents opportunities and reduces costs to the NHS. The drift back to an old normal risks Scotland losing more jobs in manufacturing buses and losing more of 13,500 jobs in the bus sector, key workers who were there when needed most and provide essential services, and are critical to a green recovery. This sector could be growing as Scotland manufactures electric buses for export, while choosing bus over car here can improve health and reduce major diseases.

This requires strategic thinking about our vision, and urgent planning with operators and energy providers now. What do we choose? Plugs along our streets for those who have electric cars or electric hubs for active and sustainable transport with more active, less congested spaces, accessible to everyone.

The #lovelybus project in Ayrshire highlighted that choosing bus over car can allow commuters to save and relax as well as be more active, clean air and reduce emissions. Bus champions were only frustrated sitting in car traffic. This could be resolved for thousands of journeys a week by prioritising bus on key arterial routes, this is especially needed around Glasgow, the 'Managed Motorways' commitment in Programme for Government 2019 needs to see urgent progress, having been stalled for almost 18 months.

Priority for action: *A framework for action on buses should be a priority for a just, green recovery. Scotland should be prioritising bus over car. As a nation that makes low and zero emission buses and exports them globally, there are huge opportunities in manufacturing buses; as well as global leaders in bus we also have many small, rural businesses providing bus and coach services.*

Priority for action: *Sustainable work and travel policies should be mandatory across the public sector, ensuring a shift in commuting and business travel is made wherever possible.*

3. IMPROVE: We also need to take action to decarbonise the remaining transport network, and this must include bus, rail & ferries as well as decarbonising the car fleet.

Priority for action: *Currently commitments to bus have been timid. These could be much bolder and provide industry with clarity. Iconic electric zero emission buses made in Falkirk should be showcased at COP26 in Glasgow, demonstrating Scottish leadership in this industry. Our cities should be at least in line with those committed to zero emission transport by 2025.*

Priority for action: *Scotland needs to see action on electrification between the Central Belt and Aberdeen and Inverness. This alone could enable 96% of passengers to travel on zero emission rail and also shift freight from road to rail reducing emissions and improving safety. The rolling programme of electrification is running out of time to be completed within the decade. In 2030, most of our diesel trains will be retired or retiring, and without the infrastructure in place we will not be able to buy electric trains for these routes.*

Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).