

DELIVERING ON ACTIVE TRAVEL COMMITMENTS

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Briefing from Transform Scotland

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Key Points:

- Walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure remains unacceptably poor, and often dangerous, across Scotland. Cycling in particular has remained at a low level, and walking rates have remained below what they could be with an improved pedestrian environment. This impacts negatively on Scotland's public health and our ability to meet our linked road traffic reduction and climate change targets.
- We strongly welcome the transformational levels of funding promised in the Programme for Government. We also welcome an emerging policy coherence, and the introduction of Ministerial-level responsibility.
- However, Local Authority engagement and levels of investment remains at best patchy. We are not convinced by the Motion's expression of "hope" that Local Authorities will now show leadership. At Transform Scotland, we have observed decades of failure by most Scottish Local Authorities in this policy area, and the Ministers will need to do more than 'being hopeful' in order to deliver on its commitments.
- We present a number of associated recommendations regarding transport government and land use planning measures (in particular Traffic Regulation Orders) which require to be urgently addressed.

1. The need for active travel investment.

There is as yet no evidence that the long-stated transport hierarchy – *which is meant to prioritise walking and cycling above all other modes of transport* – is being implemented by Local Authorities. People on foot remain marginalised and endangered by road traffic even in the very centres of our largest cities, where comprehensive and targeted streetspace reallocation is required. Meanwhile, the networks of cycle paths which are required to give people the confidence to cycle without being in fear for their safety have yet to materialise at scale.

2. Welcome for transformational levels of funding now promised.

The commitment to invest at least £320 million, or 10% of the transport budget, for active travel by 2024-25 is unprecedented and has the prospect to be genuinely transformational so long as this new funding is invested wisely.

Beyond funding, we now observe generally good alignment across transport policies/strategies, with active travel featuring prominently both in National Transport Strategy 2 (transport policy) and the draft Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (capital expenditure plans).

It is furthermore welcome that the Scottish Government has appointed a Minister with specific responsibility for this area, as this level of political attention will be required to enable Scotland to make ground in matching the best countries across Europe in conditions for walking and cycling.

3. But governance and land use planning issues need addressing.

Alongside a clear investment plan, strong Ministerial and senior civil servant leadership will be required to bring about change at the pace required in order for active travel to make a major commitment to public health, traffic reduction, and climate change targets. This leadership must extend beyond the transport 'silo' and secure active engagement from within land use planning, public health (specifically the various NHS

public bodies) and education sectors. Without this active involvement, we are not confident that a sufficient pace of change will be achieved.

We do not believe that the Government currently has the active engagement from senior elected members and officials across the 32 Local Authorities that it will require in order to deliver this transformative change. We note that the Motion states that the Government “hopes” that Local Authority leaderships will commit to the Government’s agenda. This is entirely inadequate. We have observed Local Authority investment in active travel for the past 25 years: with a few honourable exceptions, it remains at a low level and can be at best described as “patchy”, with some Local Authorities making almost no contribution from within their own funds to improving conditions for active travel.

Furthermore, we now need to see urgent reform to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process. The current requirements and procedures around road orders that are needed to build active travel infrastructure are complex, costly and time-consuming. This must be addressed if we are to build the active travel networks at the pace that is now required. The inadequacy of the current process means that implementing even modest proposals to give more space to walking and cycling can take many years and prove prohibitively expensive for Local Authorities. For instance, in a current scheme to build a city centre cycling connection in Edinburgh, the TRO and RSO process alone caused an unacceptable two year delay (see briefing link below).

4. Recommendations for the Scottish Ministers:

1. Instruct Transport Scotland to work in partnership with and draw on the extensive experience of third sector active travel organisations (particularly Sustrans) and Local Authorities to specify standards and help deliver high quality, comprehensive active travel networks.
2. Instruct Transport Scotland to reorganise its ‘Major Projects’ directorate into ‘Strategic Projects’ with specific responsibility for leading the partnerships needed to realise the strategic planning, design, delivery, and maintenance of active travel networks, ensuring the attention and importance given to it is on par with Transport Scotland’s existing responsibilities for rail and road.
3. Instruct Transport Scotland to work closely with third sector, local and regional partners in delivering active travel investment, while using its strategic remit and established funding mechanisms to ensure consistent delivery across the country.
4. Streamline the Traffic Regulation Order process to allow Local Authorities to make improvements in a faster, cheaper and more straightforward manner. There is no reasonable excuse for further prevarication by Transport Scotland in reforming processes which would enable swifter Local Authority action.
5. Support Local Authorities to make appropriate use of legal tools and engineering approaches that are customarily used in major road and rail infrastructure projects to ensure active travel infrastructure provides convenient and direct routes and can be built at speed.



Further reading:

[‘Active Recovery’](#) report (Jun-20); [‘Putting Down Routes’](#) report (Oct-21); Spokes [TRO briefing](#) (Oct-20).

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).