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# TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Parliamentary briefing

**June 2024**

# TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DEBATE

14:00, Wednesday 26 June 2024

Briefing from Transform Scotland

## Key Points:

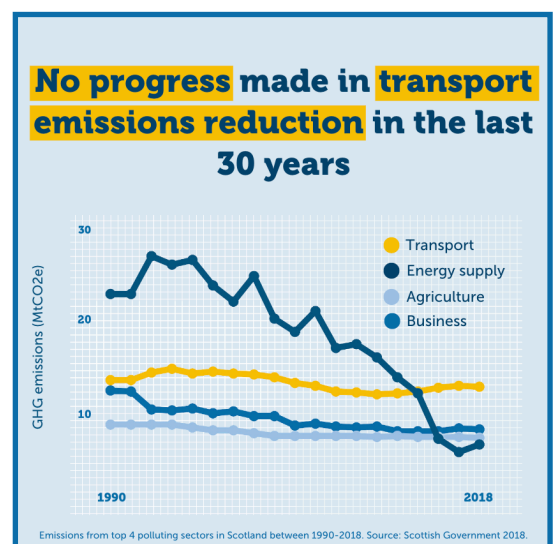
- Transport is the largest source of climate emissions (36%) in Scotland,<sup>1</sup> with next to no emissions reductions in the sector during the last 30 years.<sup>2</sup>
- We commend the Scottish Government’s commitment to cut car use by a fifth by 2030 but highlight that the complete lack of action here is severely damaging Scotland’s ability to meet its legally-binding climate targets.
- Recently cancelled investment in active and public transport is also undermining progress.
- As a devolved issue, the Scottish Ministers have ample powers and budgets to tackle emissions from transport.
- The Scottish Government must accelerate plans to deliver traffic reduction, with tangible policies and specific budgetary provision.

## 1. Transport & climate

Transport is Scotland’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and lack of progress in this sector has masked the achievements of other sectors, including decarbonising the energy supply (see graph).

Scotland’s climate targets cannot be met without delivering emissions reduction in the transport sector.

In particular, road traffic reduction is imperative – the Government’s own modelling shows it is critical to delivering the required transport sector emission cuts which, in turn, are necessary for meeting overall climate targets. This modelling finds that sufficient emission reduction cannot be brought about swiftly enough by technology change alone (e.g. the switch to EVs), and that demand reduction is also essential.



## 2. Traffic reduction

We commend the Scottish Government’s world-leading commitment to cut car traffic by 20% by 2030, and note the benefits beyond emissions reduction such as improved public health and local economies as a result of air quality improvements and local service provision.

However, this commitment is now 3.5 years old, and there’s **still no plan in place**, nor a reorientation of investment for delivery. In March, the Climate Change Committee declared this target ‘off track’, identifying a lack of clear policies to achieve the required reduction.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Investment in active & public transport

To reduce transport emissions, we must see a modal shift away from private car use. To achieve this, policies and funding to make walking, wheeling & cycling, and public transport the easiest and most affordable options for everyone must be pursued with urgency.

Yet recent cuts, such as the suspension of investment in bus priority (Bus Partnership Fund) and the failed commitment to allocate 10% of the transport budget to active travel undermine these goals. Reinstating these measures is essential.

We need to develop high-quality infrastructure, ensure affordable and accessible public transport, and provide local authorities with the necessary support. Such investments will not only reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion but also improve public health, create jobs, and promote economic resilience.

### 4. Financing investment

Recent research has found that operating costs for public transport are estimated to be around £1.6 billion a year by 2030 in order to meet traffic reduction and carbon targets.<sup>4</sup>

Given the severe budgetary constraints faced by the Scottish Government, any responsible proposals for investment in sustainable transport must also set out how a climate-compatible transport network will be financed.

We highlight here funding sources which would have wide societal & environmental benefits:

1. The Scottish Government should take advantage of the range of **novel economic instruments** already available under existing devolved powers. These include progressive parking charges and aviation taxes, climate bonds, road user charging, and land value capture.
2. The Scottish Government should **divert funds from its roads programme** (c. £7bn spend over a 10 year period<sup>5</sup>) to investment in zero carbon transport. In recent decades, capital expenditure priorities have become grotesquely skewed towards high-carbon road-building & it is long overdue for this to be corrected.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-2021/chapter-13-environment/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/06/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/documents/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/govscot:document/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Progress-in-reducing-emissions-in-Scotland-2023-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://foe.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/On-the-Move-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://transform.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Roads-to-Ruin-Transform-Scotland-2021-08-10.pdf>

## Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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**transform**  
scotland

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).