

Response to Just Transmission Commission call for evidence, from Ramblers Scotland and Transform Scotland, 30 June 2020

The climate and nature emergencies require an ambitious, transformative response from everyone, whether national and local governments, businesses or individuals, and it is crucial that any future plans have social justice at their heart.

Scotland as a whole has made good progress in reducing carbon emissions, but the transport sector has failed to respond to the challenge and still accounts for 37% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore this submission focusses on how the transport sector can make progress in meeting this challenge by looking at how to support a shift from motorised vehicles towards greater levels of walking and cycling, both for active and leisure travel. At the same time this will support the delivery of many other positive societal outcomes for health, the environment, social justice, the economy and our communities.

Below we set out a framework of proposals which form the basis of a planned transition towards a substantial increase in the proportion of short journeys undertaken by bicycle or on foot. We anticipate this transition could take place over a period of 10 years if there is sufficient leadership and resources.

Overall vision – national walking and cycling infrastructure

Scotland's path network is identified, mapped, expanded and promoted as a strategic national infrastructure project on a par with the public road network in terms of planning and investment.

This path network will provide rural and urban options for walking and cycling both for transport and leisure use, including tourism, and also create jobs, helping to support a re-adjustment towards more sustainable, local economies, reduced inequalities and improved public health.

Why walking and cycling should be at the heart of a just transition and green recovery

There will need to be significant changes in working patterns following the Covid-19 pandemic, including, in the short term at least, a potential reduction in public transport use for commuting in favour of the private car. It is therefore important that other options for sustainable transport are implemented as soon as possible.

The government's transport statistics show that in [2018](#) 53% of all journeys made in Scotland were under 5km, with the median trip by car or van at 6.8km. Many of these vehicle trips could be carried out by active travel creating a significant modal shift, but only if there is safe walking and cycling infrastructure.

Simply changing from petrol/diesel to electric vehicles is not a sustainable option in the long term, as this is unlikely to lead to any significant reduction in congestion. Climate emissions would reduce, but some [air pollution](#) would remain due to friction from tyres and brakes.

Active travel funding has increased over recent years but is still just over 3% of the overall transport budget. At the same time, development and maintenance of paths predominantly used for leisure or recreation have not received the levels of funding that active travel has enjoyed over previous years. Yet for many people leisure walking or cycling is the main way they are able to keep active, and the evidence is clear that there are huge benefits to health and wellbeing of being active in nature. A likely increase in 'staycations' in 2020 could be sustained over the longer term if opportunities are grasped to improve infrastructure as well

as investing in facilities – and staff such as ranger services. This builds on the existing, strong track record of providing holiday experiences which are based around walking, cycling and other types of outdoor activities rather than further promotion of adventures based around private car use.

Transport inequalities – statistics from [Transport Scotland](#), 2018 unless shown otherwise.

- 36% of women and 24% of men don't hold a driving licence
- White other British (78%) and White Scottish (71%) people were more likely to hold a driving licence than other ethnic groups. For Asian, Asian Scottish and Asian British people the figure is only 44%.
- 29% of households have no access to a car, but access to a car increases with household income - 96% of those earning more than £50,000 have access to a car as compared to 41% of those earning less than £10,000.
- 3.3% of the current transport budget is spent on active travel ([Spokes](#)).

Scientists predict that we have a decade to make transformative change and respond to the climate emergency. We acknowledge there is already progress towards increasing levels of walking and cycling but this is far too slow a response to the climate crisis. Therefore, **our proposal is aimed at making change happen on the ground through a step change in infrastructure expansion, to accelerate current progress with significant investment over the next 10 years**, which can then continue through smaller, incremental increases in following years.

Any response to the climate crisis needs to encompass both rural and urban transport. Rural communities have fewer choices about the way they travel and yet even short trips of up to five miles can be difficult if there is only one, possibly heavily-trafficked or narrow, road for all users. In addition, along with measures to improve rural bus services, electric bikes could revolutionise rural transport by enabling people to cycle hilly routes in poor weather – but only if there are safe routes to use.

Infrastructure relating to walking and cycling is generally seen as local level development, but the approach, leadership and funding are required strategically at a national and then regional level to support local authorities to deliver this change locally. This change also supports local, small businesses, as much infrastructure development is small-scale in nature.

In order to deliver this transformation, we have suggested below a series of elements which could be phased for funding and delivery over ten years.

A note on funding for this proposal

Currently Scottish Government active travel infrastructure projects are mainly funded from Transport Scotland with match-funding usually provided from the local authority or national park authority. Outdoor recreation funding, however, comes directly from the local authority or national park authority budgets. We have therefore divided the actions below into active travel and outdoor recreation/leisure projects, although our proposal is to develop a national Scottish path infrastructure for all users. There are likely to be economies of scale to be found through greater national coordination of these activities.

We suggest that the active travel elements of this project are predominantly funded by adjustments to the transport budget, and specifically the Scottish Government's trunk road and motorways budget over the next 10 years. In the past, we have echoed the call from the Association of Directors of Public Health for 10% of all transport budgets at local and national level to be spent on active travel. Given the situation we are now in, we believe that even this funding ambition is not high enough. We are calling for phased annual increases

of active travel funding over the next decade to go beyond 10% and by 2030 to aim for an allocation of up to 20% of transport budgets on sustainable transport (excluding investment in buses and trains) as is now the case in the [Republic of Ireland](#), to bring infrastructure up to the required standard. The current funding for trunk roads in the 2020-21 budget is £749m but we propose a phased reduction in this budget to cover costs of road maintenance but with a presumption against any new road construction or expansion projects, as recommended by the [Infrastructure Commission](#). The resulting funding which is freed up will be diverted to the active travel budget line.

In addition, paths which do not qualify as active travel routes, such as strategic long distance routes and upland paths as identified by Scottish Natural Heritage, should be funded by increased national budget allocation to SNH, and potentially by the creation of a Scottish Paths Fund to be administered by them or another delivery body for paths which do not meet the criteria to be funded as active travel routes.

(1) Rapid expansion of active travel infrastructure

1. Cycle lanes physically separated from traffic along arterial routes into all towns and cities – A strategic project to give every city and town in Scotland safe separated (also referred to as segregated) cycle lanes along faster or busier main roads into and within cities to encourage a shift to cycling primarily for local functional journeys. This project should in principle look at reallocating the road space available to cars, rather than pushing cyclists and pedestrians into using the same space, and also include improvements to footways.

2. Integrated network of local walking and cycling routes using quiet roads in each town and city – Connected to the project above, a strategic project is needed to redesign Scotland's residential roads and neighbourhoods to make cycling and walking a priority rather than vehicles, and to create better neighbourhoods where people can live and thrive. Infrastructure must reassign priority to cycling and walking rather than the car and be appropriate for all ages and abilities to benefit from. This would include 20mph zones for all restricted roads in residential areas and pedestrianisation and other urban realm improvements.

3. Increase in revenue funding – local authorities struggle to maintain paths to a high standard. Any increased capital budget must be followed with a proportionate increase in the maintenance budget.

4. Integration of walking and cycling with public transport – a specific project is needed to integrate cycling and walking into longer journeys, and especially as part of everyday journeys, such as commuting as well as for tourism. This would include the development of safe walking and cycling routes to urban and rural bus and train stations along with secure bike parking at transport hubs. It would also include the creation of increased capacity for bikes on trains and the introduction of dedicated bike space on long distance buses.

(2) Rapid development of paths for leisure and recreation

1. Phased expansion of National Walking & Cycling Network. The NWCN currently includes over 7,000km of paths and is comprised of three path datasets, the National Cycle Network, Scotland's Great Trails long distance routes and canal towpaths. Most of this

network was already in existence before it was named as a national development in NPF3, but over the past 5 years links have been created along with upgrades and maintenance.

We believe this network should now be expanded to include the 21,000km of core paths within the next 3 years to ensure great promotion of the network as a whole, and by the end of 10 years it should expand to include the wider path network. This expansion process would firstly involve adding core paths to the existing NWCN dataset, and then working at a national level to audit the network, prioritising areas for maintenance and looking at gaps in the network. This work links to the Mapping Scotland's Paths element as outlined below.

2. National Cycle Network (NCN) and other 'green route' improvement – Related to the point above, currently only 27% of the NCN is on traffic-free routes, but investment in the NCN would increase this percentage and massively expand the network as well as creating more links between existing routes and connecting communities that are a short distance apart. This would enable many people in rural areas to make safer short journeys by bicycle or on foot.

3. Mapping Scotland's Paths. There is a fundamental need to identify all paths in Scotland in order to create a proper network and prioritise funding and maintenance, and also to improve people's knowledge of where they can find paths to walk or cycle. The NWCN mentioned above has started this process for three national path datasets but, at the same time, Ramblers Scotland is currently working with partners to create a mapped database of the complete path network in Scotland (including core paths, long distance routes as well as local paths which fit an agreed set of criteria), estimated to be 60-80,000km in length. In time, this publicly available mapped network will not only give people the information they need but can also be used as a basis for local promotion of routes, particularly in those areas where the need for greater levels of physical activity and investment in greenspaces is most urgent. While this project is currently funded through Ramblers Scotland's efforts, it could become a national priority and in time form the basis of a NWCN which includes all paths. It is envisaged that ground-truthing and auditing of the paths in the database can be carried out over time as a coordinated volunteer activity, led by Ramblers Scotland in partnership with access authorities and other voluntary sector bodies.

4. Car free tourism. Scotland is blessed with opportunities for outdoor recreation and walking in particular is already a popular activity for visitors as well as residents. However, much of this tourism is car-based, so we propose a project to focus on identifying where public transport routes and services could be boosted and promoted to encourage more people to arrive by public transport as well as basing their holiday in a centre and using public transport or active travel to get around. Likewise, many of the walking and cycling paths in this project would lend themselves to promotion as touring routes in the same way as the NC500 is currently being promoted for motor vehicles, although the hope is that the fashion for car-based promotions will reduce over time. For example, the NCN route from Campbeltown to Inverness is already promoted as the Caledonian Way but there are many other potential examples for local communities to develop.

5. Upland paths. Scottish Natural Heritage has [identified](#) 410km of upland paths which require upgrade, at a cost of £27-30m in capital investment. These paths are used for leisure and recreation purposes and are crucial for Scotland's tourism industry. It is therefore important to stress that these paths are an important component of the national path network in Scotland.

(3) Investment in transition skills training and capacity building for transport planners and construction staff

It is clear to us that local authorities and Transport Scotland do not currently have the institutional capacity to deliver a massively expanded network of walking and cycling routes, paths and related infrastructure. In addition, many transport staff who have been trained to build large infrastructure projects will need to be re-trained in delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure. We estimate that this process can be prepared for immediately to get underway as soon as NPF4 is approved, and be boosted by extra investment over 1-3 years until the workforce is at the right level.

(4) Other related measures

Currently active travel funding is supporting a wide range of behaviour change projects under the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places umbrella, as well as projects encouraging young people to walk or cycle to school, including cycle training. In addition there are a plethora of small scale projects relating to bike hire schemes, cycle loans, etc. We would envisage that all projects of this type would continue and expand to support the public's modal shift.

Wider policy context to this proposal supporting a just transition

Addressing climate change

- Transport emissions need to come down in line with other sectors' emission reductions.
- Proportion of short journeys taken by walking and cycling needs to increase.
- Proportion of single occupancy car use should be targeted with incentives for those who share journeys.
- Walking/cycling routes should link to public transport hubs, and bike carriage should be available on long distance bus routes, with increased storage capacity on trains.
- Support is needed for low-emission delivery vehicles and cargo bikes, especially for final stage of deliveries in urban areas.
- Use of e-bikes for longer personal trips should be supported, including installation of charging points for cycle touring opportunities.
- This proposal will support tourism focussed on promotion of low-carbon options, such as staycations, walking and cycling routes/holidays, rather than motor-based touring.
- Greater use of walking and cycling for functional trips would lead to more support for local shops as people avoid out of town shopping centres, helping to rejuvenate town centres.

Supporting quality of life, health and wellbeing

- Providing realistic options for active travel as a first choice can lead to higher levels of physical activity and improvements in health.
- There is evidence of benefits to mental wellbeing of being active in nature.
- Any new housing developments should be at walking distance from schools, jobs, services and greenspaces, with safe paths and routes built in from the start.
- Local food producers should be able to sell their produce in farm shops or local towns, leading to a re-establishment of small scale markets.
- Rural tourism / eco tourism businesses will be boosted by all-year-round Scottish and other UK tourism.
- Investment in paths and greenspace leads to improved quality of the public realm, including in areas of deprivation.

Enabling development and investment in our economy to benefit everyone

- Walking and cycling routes by their nature tend to be small scale and localised, which means that, unlike for many large transport infrastructure projects, the skilled labour force required to build and maintain this infrastructure is likely to be locally-based, with investment bringing local economic benefit.
- We foresee the potential for revitalising local economies with small scale businesses and industries supplying regional and local needs through more localised supply chains. Economies of scale can only work when there is growth which is unrestricted by geography or environmental factors, and this is no longer the case.
- More small-scale industry and businesses will require workers who live locally and buy their goods locally, reducing the carbon footprints of goods and production.
- We are encouraged by the [plans](#) in Paris to create a '15-minute city' whereby local shops, schools and services are within a 15-minute walk and believe this would be a good model for Scottish cities which are already on a smaller scale than Paris.
- The return on investment in walking and cycling interventions is much higher than for roads, with [studies](#) showing the cost-benefit ratio can be as high as 1:13.

Improving, protecting and strengthening the special character of our places

- The placemaking agenda encompasses both green and blue infrastructure and includes investment in initiatives such as: nature networks; improvements to the quality of urban greenspace and woodlands; and improved and promoted paths along our coasts and between and around our communities, reaching into the wider countryside.
- There is [evidence](#) that the more people engage with the outdoors, the greater their understanding and commitment to the environment becomes, in terms of more sustainable activities such as recycling and environmental volunteering. This applied to all socio-economic groups and implies that people will respond to opportunities to get outdoors by demonstrating more pro-environmental behaviour.

Planning and building infrastructure to realise our long term aspirations

- The climate emergency and nature crisis give us an opportunity to make a break with current patterns of behaviour in planning and infrastructure and create ambitious, transformative projects. While the Covid-19 crisis has been devastating, it has demonstrated that people respond to calls to dramatically change behaviour when there is a clear need.
- The provision of good quality walking and cycling infrastructure is required in order to move people away from the predominance of private car use.
- For longer journeys, paths need to connect to public transport routes, and buses in particular have a strong role to play in the short to medium term, given that new rail infrastructure takes time to build.

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