

CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN UPDATE

Evidence to Scottish Parliament Environment,
Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

12 January 2021

Overview and Ambition

In considering whether this plan is sufficient, it is important to be mindful of the devastating impacts that climate change is wreaking across the planet right now - and bear in mind, it is those who are most vulnerable and have done least to cause them who suffer the worst impacts.

More frequent devastation through floods, landslides, extreme weather that is leading to disease, the destruction of crops, homes, livelihoods and infrastructure - and lives being lost. It is in that context, and with consideration of the negligible contribution that the transport sector has made to reducing Scotland's emissions over three decades that these observations are made.

With the scale of emergency, the historic failure to tackle emissions from transport and the enormity of the challenge - proposals in the Climate Change Plan update are not enough.

There are such positive initiatives in this plan, but they are completely overshadowed by the Scottish Government's roads programme. The biggest challenge is once again side-stepped. Car emissions were 5.8 MtCO_{2e} in 2018, the largest contribution of any transport mode. Road transport accounted for 10 MtCO_{2e} (68% of all transport emissions), the largest share of all transport modes.

Despite consistent advice and recommendations from the Infrastructure Commission, Just Transition Commission, Climate Change Committee principles, recommendations from the ECCLR Committee and others including the Climate Emergency Response Group to not increase road capacity - **increasing road capacity is still the major priority transport spend.**

For example: *Motorway emissions have increased substantially since 1990, with the 2018 figure 81% above that of the 1990 baseline. This increase in motorway emissions since 1990 has coincided with a substantial increase in the length of Scotland's motorway network. Between 1990 and 2017 Scotland's motorway network increased in length from 312km to 645km. Motorway vehicle kilometres rose from 3242 million in 1990 to 8518 million in 2018.*

Reference: Transport Scotland's Carbon Account (2020)

The Plan refers to following the sustainable travel hierarchy, and outlines a welcome ambition to reduce km travelled by car, but the vast majority of Transport Scotland's action and spend does not prioritise active and sustainable transport options. The budget and the action prioritises cars.

Despite Outcome 1 being a focus to reduce an over reliance on cars, there are no measurable actions presented to the Scottish Parliament in this plan to do so. There are no commitments to review the road building programme that through construction will produce and lock in emissions.

Transform Scotland recommends an **urgent moratorium and review** of all road-building projects in line with the advice from these commissions and advisors to Scottish Government. Separately, but in parallel, we urge the Parliamentary committees to hold an inquiry into the decades of transport spend that has systematically exacerbated poor health, inequalities and the climate emergency.

Governance

Especially in the midst of an emergency, facing the scale and urgency of this challenge - this plan should be expected to be clear and transparent with specific, measurable targeted actions. The use of a route map is welcomed, but it needs to be accompanied by a framework that sets out clear milestones, alongside the roles and responsibilities of those who will be involved.

In this emergency context, clear deliverable actions should be set out and accountable. Instead there is a lot of vague language like 'commit to explore options around..'; 'we will work to improve road safety..'; 'we are committed to taking forward policy consultation..'.
There is a need for urgent clarity on how these commitments will be delivered and when. The only measurable for the Scottish Parliament and people on Outcome 1 is the 20% by 2030. Without milestones, or specific deliverables to get there, how can this be scrutinised? After decades of failure to make any progress on this, it cannot be enough only to hope that it is achieved by 2030.

There is a need for leadership in this area. With climate responsibilities shared across public bodies, not one is taking overarching responsibility for scrutiny of these issues day to day. A Climate Commission could monitor and evaluate public bodies and agencies to enable them to be held to account for their actions or for neglecting to respond to advice and recommendations.

It could also oversee where there are work programmes or strategic projects that need to join up to deliver climate outcomes. It is welcome that the decarbonisation task force is now co-ordinating a dialogue between transport and energy, which had been missing and prevented long term planning. Strategic projects are still seen as major infrastructure projects, rather than projects to address bigger challenges - for example to enable modal shift, the biggest challenge.

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Behaviour Change

There are some major issues to tackle to achieve what is needed in terms of behaviour change.

It is clear that people are asked what they would like to be able to do to tackle climate change, choose to use active and public transport is a priority. Research also shows that when public transport options are safe, accessible, affordable, reliable and good quality - people will choose those modes. Despite this evidence (e.g. #BigClimateConversation), Scottish Government has not yet delivered the major investment into active and sustainable transport options that is needed.

The Scottish Government talks about the how the sustainable travel hierarchy prioritises active and sustainable choices. The transport budget prioritises cars.

A major issue undermining all government leadership on climate change is that the messaging is inconsistent. This is a lesson learned time and again through covid. To achieve behaviour change people have to understand why action is needed, and key messages for action have to be clear, consistent and led by government. There are major issues to tackle to achieve what is needed.

It is clear that people are asked what they would like to be able to do to tackle climate change, being able to use active and public transport is often a priority. Research also shows that when public transport options are safe, accessible, affordable, reliable and good quality - people will choose those modes. Despite this evidence (e.g. #BigClimateConversation), when compared with the spend on cars, Scottish Government has not yet delivered the major investment into active and sustainable transport options that is needed.

The government vision as set out in the sustainable travel hierarchy prioritises active and sustainable choices. The transport budget prioritises cars.

A major issue undermining all government leadership on climate change is that the messaging is inconsistent. On climate the message is not clear - government asks us to walk, cycle and use the bus. Yet, the government investment is in roads, increasing traffic and it is cheaper to use your car. It is not consistent, so people ask why should I recycle when the government is spending billions on new roads. Government leadership is not clear, we are being asked to do one thing while government makes it easier to do another that contradicts the message.

These major issues are overlooked in the Plan. Transform Scotland would be delighted to be talking solutions, we are pleased to see progress in many areas. On rail, the ambition must be for 2030 and there are delays to the rolling programme of electrification already - because the priority for action and resource is elsewhere - on cars and road building rather than provision of the safe, accessible, inclusive, clean, efficient transport system people consistently say that they need.



Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

Transform Scotland
5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR
t: 0131 243 2690
e: <info@transformscotland.org.uk>
w: <www.transform.scot>

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).