

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Green recovery

Submission from Transform Scotland

Introductory comments

Transform Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the ECCLR Committee's call for views on the opportunity for Green Recovery.

This evidence complements a series of reports we have published on priorities for Corona Recovery, focusing on justice, active travel, public transport and digital connectivity - all of which will be key to a just, green recovery.¹

Do the principles of sustainable development, and those for a resilient recovery, as proposed by the UK Committee on Climate Change, provide a comprehensive framework for guiding an effective green recovery in Scotland?

Yes, the principles of sustainable development and those set out by the UK CCC should inform the framework for recovery. A comprehensive framework for a green recovery must be based on the scientific reality that as we recover from a health emergency, we are in the midst of a climate and ecological emergency. An emergency that requires much more urgent action than it has received. Any further delay will lead to more devastating consequences.

Across all budgets, in every department, public spend should go through appraisal to ensure it will not make social, health and environmental problems worse. Scrutiny should ensure all public spend contributes to sustainable development - within environmental limits, in line with science, towards ensuring a strong and just society and a sustainable economy. Spend should be screened for any impacts on nature, climate and equalities and good governance should make this clear.

To recover to good health and tackle the climate emergency, Scotland needs to achieve a **modal shift** (out of the private car) and **decarbonisation** of transport. The potential to do this while tackling inequalities, improving health, creating jobs and strengthening the economy is huge.

Climate investments in transport will be essential in delivering a truly just, green recovery. This could lead and embed a shift towards positive long-term behaviours and embed fairness as a key principle of a sustainable transport system that works for everyone, across the country.

To achieve a just, green recovery will require an urgent transformation of the transport budget, priorities, policies and structures on transport and how we are connected, based on recovery to good health and the principles of **avoid, shift, improve** - these should underpin incentives to reduce emissions and give everyone options.

¹ Available at <https://transform.scot/what-we-do/campaigns/corona-recovery-series>

(v) The legacy of transport decision-making in Scotland shows what happens if principles are not applied. Exacerbated inequalities, poor health, increased emissions, congestion, pollution, loss of biodiversity and land, the outcomes of decades of prioritising road building.

(vi) It is alarming that principles of sustainable development are still not being applied to major transport decisions being made in Scotland. Despite declaration of Climate Emergency over a year ago; a Corona Crisis exacerbating inequalities; impacts on respiratory health from pollution; no reduction in transport emissions since 1990 and a missed climate target - the investment priority for Transport Scotland remains increasing road capacity for cars.

(vi) The principles of sustainable development should inform and shape sustainable transport policies right across the public sector, in every organisation and department. This is important for leadership, consistency of message, to enable behaviour change and to build resilience.

What are the key barriers to delivering a green recovery within your sector?

New challenges

During the coronavirus crisis, bus and rail services kept communities connected with essential services for key workers. These services are even more vulnerable following covid as passengers regain confidence in using them again. These services, as well as skilled manufacturing jobs in producing low or zero emission buses, are at risk now but will be absolutely critical to a green recovery and therefore urgently require strategic support.

There may be a drift back to an old normal, where people rely even more on the car as a default because they feel discouraged from using public transport. This obviously will have climate and other negative impacts, which need to be considered and managed.

Major barriers

More fundamentally in transport, the major barriers to delivering a green recovery and positive action to tackle the Climate Emergency continue to be cultural and structural - and illustrated most starkly in the capital expenditure priorities of Transport Scotland.

There are strong contradictions in a vision for active and sustainable transport presented by Transport Scotland, and the reality of where transport spend is actually directed.

For example, where Local Authorities are being required to 'rapidly' deploy priority for buses, Transport Scotland continues to fail to do so on arterial routes.

Lack of urgency on Programme for Government commitments to reduce emissions:

Almost a year ago, the 2019 Programme for Government led to bold commitments on bus and rail as a key Climate Emergency response. Yet, despite the urgency needed, there has been no progress on the ground, with neither progress on the commitment to invest £500 million to improve local bus services, nor on the commitment to prioritise bus on motorways around Glasgow. These could have secured skilled jobs critical to a green recovery now under threat and improved services, health and reduced emissions.

Immediate return to old normal:

On 25 June, Transport Scotland indicated that it was getting back to work on 'major projects'.*[reference not provided]* However, this was to five major projects focused on private cars - not public transport for everyone, or to prioritise bus and jobs, or to improve health or reduce emissions.

Despite declaration of a Climate Emergency, there is still a much bigger focus on high carbon infrastructure, locking in more emissions - not less.

Governance

There remains a lack of transparency, openness and accountability in the work of Transport Scotland. The Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) process is an example. Keen to be reassured that expertise in climate impacts and equalities had been included in the process of developing STPR2, we enquired about the list of stakeholders who had been invited to be involved: we were advised that this was not published and would not be shared.

It is imperative that STPR2 focus on strategic projects that will reduce emissions, through modal shift and decarbonisation. For example, to deliver a cross-departmental transport and energy plan to ensure green electricity is installed for railways and recharging hubs for cities and regions. However, given Transport Scotland's decade-long focus on trunk road construction, we are not confident that it is culturally well-placed to deliver a focus on modal shift, demand management and decarbonisation projects.

Transformational change required.

In May 2019, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform made this commitment:

"To deliver the transformational change that is required, we need structural changes across the board: to our planning, procurement, and financial policies, processes and assessments. That is exactly what we'll do."

"Responding to the #ClimateEmergency will not be easy, but Scotland is not in the business of taking the easy way out. Scotland's response to the #ClimateEmergency must be hardwired into our national psyche. This must be a shared, national endeavour."*[reference not provided]*

This has not happened in transport. Transport Scotland has not shared in a national endeavour and public efforts to reduce emissions.

Parliamentary Inquiry

With the continued lack of action on reducing climate emissions from transport, we cannot afford to delay any further. Public money continues to be funnelled into high carbon infrastructure, while skilled jobs, critical to green recovery and tackling this emergency are being lost right now.

Scotland's transport system could be inclusive, accessible, affordable, good quality and powered by clean, green electricity. It could aim to be zero emission by 2030. It could

strengthen the economy, improve health and tackle inequalities. It should be a system that works for everyone, providing good options to avoid, shift, improve - but this needs urgent action to become a reality. The benefits could be huge. Yet even with direction from the First Minister, progress fails or is slow.

A Parliamentary Inquiry is urgently needed to identify and tackle the barriers that have led to the lack of progress in reducing transport emissions (0.67% reduction from 1990 levels); a continued focus on major infrastructure exacerbating climate, social, environmental problems; and a lack of pace and budget to deliver on active and sustainable transport, leaving jobs and services at risk.

What key policies, actions and immediate priorities are needed to deliver a green recovery within your sector?

This emergency demands an **immediate stop** to building additional road capacity that goes against the principles outlined by:

- locking in greenhouse gas emissions (generating more car traffic);
- increasing climate risk by destruction of carbon sinks such as woodlands, high carbon soils and wetlands;
- reducing resilience from climate impacts like flooding and;
- impacting negatively upon equalities, health, biodiversity, landscapes and productive land.

To achieve a just, green recovery will require an urgent **transformation of the transport budget, priorities, policies and 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:

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.

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.

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: The Scottish Government should 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.

The Scottish Government should financially incentivise Local Authorities to reallocate road space to prioritise active travel. 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.

Public transport choices should be affordable, reliable, high quality, clean and efficient.

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: Currently commitments to bus (e.g. in the Climate Change Plan) 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 COP 26 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.

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.

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.

Priority for action: The #lovemybus 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 commitment in Programme for Government 2019 needs to see urgent progress.

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 disease.

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.

Where we can **improve** the options for everyone to enable equity of choice across society and the country, that should be a priority. A rolling programme of improvements to increase capacity and to decarbonise the entire railway could bring benefits across Scotland, between our cities and long rural routes. This could be achieved by 2030, it just needs to be funded and delivered urgently. Devolution of rail powers could also provide an opportunity to switch to clean Scottish electricity.

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.

Priority for action: Scotland should decarbonise its sea transport connections by introducing electric ferries, as part of a programme of investment in vessels and ports. Action is also required to ensure that bus and rail services are fully integrated with ferry timetables.

How should the 2021/22 Budget support a green and sustainable recovery and avoid locking in carbon; and what funding is needed in the ECCLR portfolio to deliver a green and sustainable recovery?

We would support the Just Transition Commission advice on Green Recovery:

“The opportunity to re-prioritise any existing transport spend, currently earmarked for increasing road capacity, and redirect it toward investments in low-carbon transport initiatives should be actively pursued.”

The Budget should prioritise transport spend towards delivery of a zero emission transport system that is fair, and works for everyone, by 2030.

This bold, positive vision could set Scotland out as a leader, invest in our innovation and industry, create green jobs and ensure everyone has options to avoid or choose active and sustainable travel across the country. This will require a complete transformation of the transport budget, with a switch of priorities, out of road-building and into digital connectivity, active travel and sustainable transport.

Why should this be the priority?

Successive governments have failed to make any meaningful progress in reducing emissions from transport in three decades. This time, it is absolutely critical we do. This could be a pivotal moment.

It is now about choices. There is a choice about the pathway.

Scottish Government can continue to spend £6-8 billion making the problem worse by building new roads, or **switch** to a system that is fair for all, powered by clean renewable electricity - to transition to a positive, inclusive vision securing strong positive outcomes for our economy, society, health and planet.

The choices Scottish Government makes are clear from the budget.

Currently those choices are impacting upon health, the NHS, exacerbating inequalities and failing to tackle pollution and emissions.

Scotland could exacerbate the problems, or seize the opportunity.

Scotland manufactures zero emission buses, has a good track record and expertise in electrification of rail, the production of renewable electricity, and the provision of public transport services.

The experience of the Corona Crisis has seen an increase in flexible working that should be supported and enabled where possible. It has demonstrated the importance of key workers and essential services that are most critical and highlighted where investment is urgently needed to equip us for a green recovery. It has also accelerated the shift away from fossil fuels, and our transition needs to be considered in that context. In transport there are opportunities to mobilise money away from assets that may become stranded, into jobs and solutions for the future.

We sincerely hope that the ECCLR Committee will scrutinise the actions and plans from the Scottish Government, and help ensure that redirection of funding turns transport around and truly delivers a just, green recovery.

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