

PEDAL ON PARLIAMENT

BRIEFING – EVIDENCE TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL
INVESTMENT COMMITTEE ON THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT
DRAFT BUDGET 2013-14.



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SUMMARY

Although we welcome any increase in funding for cycling, the recently announced additional £6 million announced in the draft budget does not represent anything close to the sort of step change in funding that is needed. Not only is the government in danger of missing its own targets for increasing cycling levels and cutting carbon emissions, it is failing to make one of the best investments available, offering benefits far in excess of those achieved by any other transport spending. This is not about providing facilities for the minority who cycle now; it is about enabling active travel for the entire population. Cycling infrastructure is a proven way of getting people cycling but if it is to bring about 10% of journeys by bike by 2010, then work has to start now to plan and create a coherent, connected urban network of safe direct routes in every town and city in Scotland. With proper funding Scotland could join the other countries of Northern Europe in treating cycling as an integral and important part of its transport strategy, continuing to lead the way within the UK, rather than risking falling behind.

OUR POLICY

Pedal on Parliament's manifesto (attached) calls for significant funding for cycling of up to £25 per head, which is comparable to Dutch levels of spending per head. This would mean around 5% of the current Scottish national transport budget (around £100 million a year) plus additional spending from local authorities. This should be within the context of around 10% of the transport budget being spent on active travel in the broader sense. We also call for the bulk of the cycling spending to be investment in the creation and upgrading of a network of cycling routes built to the best international standards, rather than softer measures such as cycling promotion campaigns.

WHY IS THIS INVESTMENT NEEDED?

1. Investment in infrastructure, including a dense network of direct, dedicated cycling tracks, is the most effective way to get people of all ages onto their bicycles.¹ NICE public health guidelines recommend reallocating road space to active travel, including cycling.² Cycling England found that an investment of £10 per head year on year brought about increases in cycling in their Cycling Demonstration towns of 27% over three years³ – but given Scotland's low cycling base, with less than 2% of journeys by bike, more than that will need to be done to achieve the government's target of 10% of journeys by 2020. The Transform Scotland report on Civilising our Streets looked at cities with high levels of cycling and walking and found that not only were they investing more, but they were doing so over sustained periods of time, up to 40 years in some cases.⁴ Such sustained investment brings about results. Recent research shows that cycling levels in cities in the US are closely correlated to the amount of cycling infrastructure each city has,⁵ and even where cycling rates are low, sustained investment can have a dramatic effect. For instance Sydney has seen an 82% increase in cycling in just two years as a result of its ongoing 5-year investment in its cycling strategy, which includes the construction of 55km of separate cycle tracks by 2016.⁶

2. Investment in active travel brings about the greatest returns of all transport investment. A benefit-cost ratio of 2:1 or more for an infrastructure project is generally considered 'high', yet the median ratio for walking and cycling investment is 13:1 (or 19:1 if only projects in the UK are considered) with the bulk of the benefit coming from health improvements.⁷ Investment in off-road urban cycling infrastructure (which could mean segregated tracks alongside roads as well as canal or park paths) has the greatest economic benefit of all new cycling infrastructure.⁸ Building cycling infrastructure is also likely to create more jobs, pound for pound, than building new roads.⁹

3. More cycling brings health benefits both directly to the individual and indirectly to the wider society. The benefits to the individual are well rehearsed and regular cycling can reduce mortality by up to 39%¹⁰ and increase life expectancy by up to 14 months, even allowing for accidents and exposure to pollution.¹¹ The benefits of avoided deaths to Scotland's economy if cycling rates were to increase to 13% have been calculated at £1-2 billion per year.¹² Fewer car journeys will also mean less pollution, with wider health benefits for everyone.

4. It will also cut congestion and increase productivity, bringing additional economic benefits. In busy urban centres a very small reduction in traffic can have a large effect on congestion and delays. This means that reallocating road space away from cars can cut rather than increase congestion.¹³ Road building and widening programmes often underestimate the phenomenon of induced demand, meaning any reductions in congestion are likely to be temporary yet the same induced demand effect actually makes cycling infrastructure more effective over time as people switch to bikes.¹⁴ Studies have also found lower absenteeism rates among regular cyclists, increasing overall productivity.¹⁵

5. Investment in active travel boosts both the economy and equality. Over 30% of Scottish households do not have access to a car, so allowing the car to dominate our towns and cities compounds existing inequalities.¹⁶ Encouraging cycling can also help revive local economies. Cyclists are more likely to shop in town centres rather than out of town, make more shopping trips than drivers and spend more in shops overall, so more of their money stays in the local economy.¹⁷ They also need less space to park, increasing the total capacity of any given town centre. Cycling can also bring in visitors from the UK and abroad. Scotland is already an attractive cycle touring destination, and cycle tourists spend up to a third more than other kinds

of visitors;¹⁸ encouraging more cycle tourism, including family touring and cycling holidays, could significantly expand this lucrative sector.

6. Without this investment, Scotland is on course to miss its carbon emission reduction targets of 42% by 2020. Emissions from road transport were 23.5% of Scotland's total emissions – 62% of which come from cars – in 2009¹⁹ and in 2010, transport emissions actually rose by 2%. 64% of all journeys in Scotland are by car, half of which are less than 2 miles, a distance that can easily be tackled by bike if the road conditions are right. If 20% of those journeys were on foot or by bike, it is estimated that transport emissions would fall by 5%.²⁰

HOW CAN IT BE AFFORDED?

We recognise that money is tight and that there are many worthy beneficiaries for both transport and overall spending. We feel that the investment can be made by reallocating existing spending rather than increasing spending overall. We would urge the Scottish Government to consider the following points when finalising the budget:

1. Building roads creates traffic; building cycling infrastructure creates cyclists. Road widening and road building programmes can only bring about short-term cuts in congestion at best whereas investing in cycling infrastructure creates a lasting legacy. We therefore feel that increasing road capacity should be a last resort when considering spending priorities to tackle congestion.

2. Dangerous roads do not necessarily have to be widened to make them safer. Expensive projects like dualling the A9 are often justified by the number of lives saved through collisions avoided. Yet recent evidence shows that average speed cameras are extremely effective at reducing accidents at a fraction of the cost. In fact the Transport Scotland report that on the A77 average speed cameras alone have resulted in a reduction of deaths annually by 60% and casualties by 40%.²¹ A recent report by the A9 Safety group also backs the use of average speed cameras on the A9. Trying average speed cameras first, and road widening only as a last resort, would free up significant money for investment in active travel. Smart, targeted road improvements such as overtaking lanes can also result in reduced casualties and lives saved for fractions of the cost.

3. Electric cars, even those powered entirely from renewable resources, do nothing to reduce congestion, nor do they encourage active travel and despite subsidies have not been widely taken up in Scotland. They are currently only really practical for short journeys – exactly the sort of trips that could be done by bike. We believe that money spent subsidising both their purchase and the development of charging infrastructure would be better spent on cycling instead.

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT.

A proper, fully funded, Cycling Action Plan for Scotland. If we are to meet our 2010 targets, then we cannot afford to waste the next eight years. The current CAPS offers little in the way of a serious road map for increasing cycling, and has almost no funding attached to it.²² Without a plan, money risks being wasted on building the wrong things in the wrong place or in the wrong way.

Longer funding horizons. Capital investment, such as building a network requires a long-term investment programme, planned over at least the next five years. Agencies such as Sustrans and

Cycling Scotland, and local authority roads departments can't retain experienced staff if money for cycling is only being made available year by year.

Partnership with local authorities. At the moment, while CAPS sets targets nationally, Local authorities have no such targets, nor any statutory requirement to provide for cycling or increase its use. Given that the bulk of short term journeys happen on local authority roads, then councils must be involved in implementing the CAPS. This could be achieved by placing a duty on them to provide a network (as with the core paths network), through better ringfencing of cycling funding, or through substantial funds made available for LAs to bid for, or a combination of all three. Without some sort of mechanism to transfer the aspiration of the Scottish government for more cycling down to the individual authorities who must make it a reality, we might as well have a target for more sunshine.

Clarity and accountability. Money for cycling is currently spread over a number of funds, often in combination with other active or sustainable travel spending. This makes it unclear what is actually being spent, and what the outcomes are. Without clarity on what is being spent, and good accountability to ensure that the money spent has achieved the desired outcomes, we will not make progress.

¹ See Bristol City Council, "A rapid desk-top review of interventions which increase the number of people cycling" <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/What-works-Cycling%201010.pdf>

² NICE (2008) "Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity" <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/PH008Guidancev2.pdf>

³ Cycling England figures taken from Sloman L, Cavill N, Cope A, Muller L and Kennedy A (2009) Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns Report for Department for Transport and Cycling England. Cycling England, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110407094607/http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/analysis-and-synthesis-report.pdf>

⁴ Transform Scotland Civilising the Streets: How strong leadership can deliver high quality of life and vibrant public spaces <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets-project.aspx>

⁵ See for instance Buehler & Pucher (2012) Cycling to work in 90 large American cities: new evidence on the role of bike paths and lanes. *Transportation* 39:409-432
<http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/bikepaths.pdf>

⁶ Guardian Bike Blog "How Sydney got non-cyclists on two wheels"
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/bike-blog/2012/jun/28/sydney-noncyclists-bikes>

⁷ See Davis, A. (2010) Value for Money: An Economic Assessment of Investment in Walking and Cycling, Department of Health, Government Office for the South West,
<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=91553>

⁸ Davis, A. (2009) Economic Benefits of Cycling, Essential evidence on a page no. 24
<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/cd-essential-evidence-no-24-economic-benefits.pdf>

⁹ In the US, a recent study found that 11.4 construction jobs were created for every \$1million spent on cycling infrastructure (compared to 7.8 jobs for road construction) Heidi Garrett-Peltier (2011) Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A national Study of Employment Impacts. Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/published_study/PERI_ABikes_June2011.pdf

¹⁰ Cycling England, Cycling and Health: what's the evidence?
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110407094607/http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/site/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/cycling_and_health_full_report.pdf

¹¹ Johan de Hartog, Boogaard H, Nijland H, *et al.* (2010) Do the health benefits of cycling outweigh the risks? *Environ Health Perspect* 2010 ; **118** : 1109 – 16.

¹² Paths for All http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_FinanceCommittee/Inquiries/Paths_for_All.pdf

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- ¹³ Cairns, Atkins & Goodwin (2001) Disappearing Traffic? The story so far
http://www.onestreet.org/images/stories/Disappearing_traffic.pdf
- ¹⁴ See Naess, P., Nicolaisen, M.S. and Strand, A. (2012) "Traffic Forecasts Ignoring Induced Demand: A shaky fundament for cost-benefit analyses", EJTIR, 12(3)
http://www.ejtir.tbm.tudelft.nl/issues/2012_03/pdf/2012_03_02.pdf
- ¹⁵ TNO (2009) Reduced sickness absence in regular commuter cyclists can save employers 27 million Euros <http://www.vcl.li/bilder/518.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Cycling Scotland *et al.* (2012) *Active Travel, Active Scotland: Our journey to a sustainable future*
- ¹⁷ Krag, T (2002) "Commerce and Bicycles", Paper presented at 'Trafikdage' at Aalborg University
- ¹⁸ <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/france/actu/0202180469837-les-reseaux-cyclables-dopent-l-activite-touristique-353229.php>
- ¹⁹ National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory (2009) —
<http://www.naei.org.uk/reports.php?list=GHG%20>
- ²⁰ Cycling Scotland *et al.* (2012) *Active Travel, Active Scotland: Our journey to a sustainable future*
- ²¹ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/safety/average-speed-cameras>
- ²² See our response to the CAPS (attached)