

SPOKES

The Lothian Cycle Campaign

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To: Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Scottish Government

Cc: *Party Environment Representatives...*

Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Environment Minister

Sarah Boyack MSP, Labour

Jim Hume MSP, LibDem

Nanette Milne MSP, Conservative

Patrick Harvie MSP, Green Party

6 December 2009

Dear Mr Lochhead

Copenhagen Climate Summit

I am writing on behalf of Spokes, and in particular some 60 individuals who are today joining a 35-mile cycle ride in Edinburgh in support of the Ride Planet Earth initiative for a strong climate deal at Copenhagen. Ride Planet Earth was started by Kim Nguyen, who has cycled for 16 months from Australia, through Asia and Europe, to Copenhagen, and is supported in his efforts by concerned cyclists across the world. Today's ride in Edinburgh is one of many in cities around the planet, from China to North America, from South America to Africa, from Australia to Europe. For more information about Ride Planet Earth, and Kim Nguyen's epic journey, raising environmental awareness and supporting environmental initiatives throughout the last 16 months, see his blog at www.rideplanetearth.org.

This letter is being officially delivered to you by Spokes member Sarah Boyack MSP who, as you will know, has a longstanding concern over climate issues; and who when Transport Minister set up two schemes which helped initiate the now rapidly growing awareness of cycling as an environmentally essential means of transport – the Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets fund, and the rules to encourage cycling integration into bids to the then Public Transport Fund. We are also writing to UK Energy and Climate Change Minister Ed Miliband, and attach that letter for your interest. Likewise, we are copying this letter to him.

What can be achieved at Copenhagen, and thereafter, depends on everyone from individuals to governments. As regular bike users, we are making a personal contribution to the decarbonising of transport, collectively we are illustrating what can and must be done within transport, and as a pressure group we are drawing this to the attention of government.

We are delighted with the very ambitious Climate Change Act passed by the Scottish Government and, specifically on cycle use, that this is reflected in the government's target that 10% of all journeys in Scotland should be by bike in 2020.

However, ambitious policies and targets mean nothing unless reflected in equally ambitious and urgent action. We are fully aware that the Scottish government is moving forward determinedly in certain areas of climate action – for example renewable energy. Equally we are exceptionally disappointed and greatly concerned that progress in terms of transport is seriously awry and, in particular, action on cycling investment is completely lacking.

The recent Scottish Parliament SPICe publication *Cycling in Scotland* uses our research (“*the most comprehensive analysis of funding for Scottish cycling projects*”) showing that not only is total cycling investment in Scotland (from all main sources) equivalent to less than 1% of the £2.5bn transport budget, but it is actually declining under your government.

The **Sustainable Development Commission**, your own official independent advisory body on sustainable development said in its *First Assessment* that in Scotland “*Transport is the poorest performing area for sustainable development*” and, within that badly performing area, “*active travel is in relative decline.*” Their *Third Assessment*, published only last week, states that your 2020 target for 10% of journeys to be by bike “*is welcome but requires significant investment in high quality, safe and attractive*” cycling infrastructure. It says that “*a significant reallocation of transport funds*” is required. It identifies “*a gap between the Scottish Government's aims and its financial commitments.*”

These messages could not be clearer or more strongly worded. They are vigorously echoed by the Parliament's own all-party **Transport Infrastructure & Climate Change Committee** in its just-published report on the 2010/11 draft budget.

- ◆ “*The treatment of active travel in the draft budget once again gives the Committee cause for concern.*”
- ◆ *The fact that proposed spend in this area is declining at a time when one of the stated objectives of the Scottish Government is to achieve a ten-fold increase in cycling journeys, appears to the Committee to be contradictory.*
- ◆ *The greenhouse gas emissions reductions required by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 represent a hugely significant challenge for the Scottish Government. The Committee is of the view that if the Scottish Government is to be perceived as taking seriously the need to encourage modal shift to more sustainable transport modes to reduce emissions from transport, it must begin to make more practical moves towards doing so.*
- ◆ *It considers that if significant progress is to be made, new methods of delivering funding need to be developed, perhaps in the direction being argued by Spokes in its well argued submission to the Committee.*
- ◆ *It is of the view that the decline in the funding of sustainable transport and active travel line needs to be not only reversed, but significantly increased.*
- ◆ *The Committee therefore recommends that the Scottish Government should conduct an exercise to establish what scope exists across the transport budget for reallocating resources in order to reverse the incremental decline in the active travel line. It further recommends that this exercise is conducted prior to the debate on the Finance Committee's report on the draft budget and that the results are submitted to both committees.”*

We urge most strongly that the government pays heed to all the above independent, expert and all-party messages.

For the longer term, funding levels and mechanisms can be debated in the next Spending Review. However, as TICC points out, immediate action is needed for 2010-11 financial year. **We urge you as Environment Secretary, if serious about action on Climate Change, to ensure *within Cabinet* that the immediate exercise requested by TICC is undertaken, with a view to a modest reallocation of resources within transport for 2010-11.** The Spokes budget submission, commended (above) by TICC, provides a way of achieving such a re-allocation. It is a carefully thought-out, practical and easily implemented proposal, based on ideas discussed in detail with government transport officials last year. It could be funded by a modest reduction not in existing levels of trunk road funding but in the proposed *growth* in the trunk roads budget – perhaps postponing one scheme for a year – itself a further contribution to government emissions targets.

Without such action, and with Holyrood elections on the horizon, the SNP government could be in the unenviable position of being the only Scottish government to have cut cycling investment in total - and possibly even in every successive year of its period of office – and this at a time when the climate change and energy security messages are becoming far stronger and more urgent.

The Scottish Government has gained great credit with its Climate Change Act, which we hope will encourage other nations at Copenhagen. But this credit is in danger of ebbing away without determined action in every area of climate policy, so that the ambitious targets are seen to be credible – and transport policy, and specifically cycling investment, is where action is most clearly and most sorely lacking. **We on Ride Planet Earth today are doing what we can as individuals in support of the aims of the Climate Change Act – will the very government which introduced that Act do the same??** We look forward to your re-assurance.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu

for Spokes and for the December 6th participants in the Edinburgh event of Ride Planet Earth

Enc – letter from Spokes to Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change at Westminster