

# SPOKES

*The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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To: Members of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

17 January 2010

Dear TICC Committee Member

## **Budget 2010-11 negotiations + debate 20 January**

Following your report to Finance Committee on the draft budget, many individuals wrote to their MSPs in support of your recommendation of an urgent exercise to identify scope for a transfer of funding to cycling and walking investment. Many have forwarded us replies from MSPs and from Ministers.

In particular I received a personally signed response from the Cabinet Secretary, John Swinney MSP.

A common theme of these responses is that Mr Swinney "*will be interested to hear any specific proposals on which other commitments should be dropped or delayed to allow reallocation to cycling.*" Without such specific proposals, Mr Swinney appears to refuse to take the Committee seriously.

Of course the Committee, in its above report, pointed out that this is difficult since the categories in the budget are at a high level, generally not identifying individual projects, which is why you requested the exercise. Nonetheless, this is the issue on which Ministers are attempting to found their defence of a shameful imbalance in transport funding. You will be aware that the official government advisory body, the **Sustainable Development Commission**, in their recent *3rd Assessment of Scottish Government progress* identified "*a gap between the Scottish Government's aims and its financial commitments*" on sustainable transport, and it called for "*a significant reallocation of transport funds*" - very similar to your own conclusions and recommendations.

**WE URGE YOU AND YOUR PARTY TO CHALLENGE MR SWINNEY ON THIS IN THE BUDGET DEBATE, AND IN BEHIND-THE-SCENES BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS, AND TO MAKE SPECIFIC BUDGET PROPOSALS IN RESPONSE TO HIS ABOVE REQUEST.**

Of course, it is for you and/or your party to come up with specific proposals. As you know, the suggestion in the Spokes budget submission is a transfer from the Motorways and Trunk Road budget line. This has shot up from £929.6m in 2008-09 to £1153.0m in 2010-11, a **rise** of £223m. At the same time the Sustainable and Active Travel budget line has stayed virtually static at a mere £11.0m in 2008-09 and £11.2m in 2010-11. A transfer of £20m represents a mere 10% reduction in the trunk roads **increase** but would double total cycle investment. Even £10m would mean many tens of cycle projects across Scotland, at the probable cost of delaying one smallish trunk road project for one year.

To Opposition MSPs we also add that a second line of argument from the governing party in letters to members of the public is, "*I wish to highlight that opposition parties have so far been more concerned with GARL – the Glasgow Airport Rail Link – than active transport*" [Dr Ian McKee, MSP]. Whilst GARL is obviously a major issue, so is investment in cycling and walking, which affects the whole of Scotland, and far more people. Surely Dr McKee is not correct in suggesting that cycling and walking investment are seen as relatively unimportant?

**In conclusion, we urge you to challenge Ministers in budget negotiations and in the budget debate - and ideally with specific proposals. Their disregard of the Committee's evidence-based recommendations, and equally of the SDC's recommendations, in both cases for 3 years in a row, is truly shocking.**

We would be very pleased to hear of any action you take on this.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu  
for Spokes

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## **COMMENTS ON TICC INQUIRY EVIDENCE, 12 JANUARY 2010**

On a separate, though related, matter - I read with interest the written evidence from Dr John Parkin and from SESTRAN, both of whom highlight fundamental funding issues which forcefully confirm the points made in Spokes submissions both on the budget and to the Inquiry.

### **INVESTMENT PER HEAD**

Dr Parkin pointed out that European countries which have achieved high levels of everyday cycle use have consistently invested around £15 per head per year. That compares to little over £3 per head in Scotland.

### **CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN CYCLING**

Alex Macaulay for SESTRAN highlighted the very serious impact on cycling investment of the transfer of capital from RTPs to Councils. Of course this was not a deliberate cycling cut by the government, but the government cannot disown the impact of its own decisions. Mr Macaulay's evidence reinforces our own funding research which showed clearly that cycling investment has fallen drastically under this government for two main reasons, one being this transfer of former RTP capital, and the second being the 50% cut in funding to Sustrans. These significant falls are in no way compensated by the small additional sums from Health, CCF, or even by the cycling element of the Smarter Choices project.

We have to add that under the previous Lab/Lib administration there was a remarkably similar situation, with an unintended cut in cycling investment due to abolition of the then Public Transport Fund. When Spokes forcibly highlighted the issue the Lab/Lib administration responded with an additional £4m a year grant to Sustrans for 2 years - more than compensating for the unintended loss. Would that the present government paid similar attention to the evidence on the impact of their policies.