

SPOKES

The Lothian Cycle Campaign

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Submission to Scottish Parliament Finance Committee

Inquiry into Preventative Spending

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the above, and regret that our submission is not more detailed, due to other pressures. We therefore concentrate on a few main issues.

Spokes is a voluntary organisation, established in 1977, and with over 1000 members – predominantly in Edinburgh and the Lothians, but also dotted across Scotland. Our aims are to promote cycling for everyday purposes (such as getting to work and shops, and for everyday family leisure) and to encourage councils and government to do the same. We have no interest in cycling as sport.

Q1 How can public spending best be focussed over the longer term in trying to prevent, rather than deal with, negative social outcomes?

Our primary response to question 1 is that in respect of transport issues we endorse the submission¹ by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland [SCCS], of which we are a member. *In other words...*

- ◆ The proposals set out in the government's own document, approved by Parliament, *Low Carbon Scotland: the Report on Proposals and Policies [RPP]*² in respect of active travel (cycling and walking) should be fully funded in the forthcoming spending review and specifically in the budget for 2012-13 [for further detail see p6 of SCCS submission, section entitled 'Transport Proposals and Policies'].
- ◆ The above funding should not come from additional transport funding, but from a re-allocation of existing overall transport investment levels, which currently are grossly skewed away from active travel and towards projects which threaten climate targets and provide no public health benefit – and indeed, may encourage health-negative sedentary lifestyles [for further detail see p7 of SCCS submission, section entitled 'Refocusing Spending'].

The two above steps, particularly when taken together, would have a very worthwhile preventative effect in terms of improving **public health** and in terms of helping meet **Scotland's climate change targets**. Increasing obesity and climate-related events are both already impacting on public spending, and preventative action now is vital to minimise these growing threats to future budgetary options.

The value of active travel in relation to **climate change targets** is covered in the SCCS submission, so will not be discussed further here.

The value of active travel in relation to **public health** is also discussed in the SCCS submission [including on p3, numbered paras 5 and 6]. Additionally, we cite *Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North*

¹ <http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/11/sep/sccs-evidence-preventative-spending-finance-committee>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/344868/0114766.pdf>

*America, and Australia*³. This paper shows a clear inverse relationship between obesity rates and levels of active travel in developed countries. The paper also references other research from Sweden, the US and Australia, comparing individuals rather than countries, and in all cases showing the same inverse relationship between obesity and levels of active travel.

Q2 What evidence can you provide from the UK and abroad to show that promoting preventative spending has been effective?

In terms of public health, we refer to the above paper, *Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North America, and Australia*. The countries with low obesity, and high levels of active travel, are countries which have invested *heavily and consistently over the years*, in infrastructure to make active travel a pleasant, welcoming and safe experience. Further evidence on comparative funding levels and active travel levels between countries can be found in other papers by Prof John Pucher⁴

Q3 The Finance Committee has recommended that the Scottish Government continue to direct its spend towards preventative programmes. Which programmes should be prioritised?

We strongly disagree with the premise of this question, which suggests that the Scottish Government already directs its spend towards preventative programmes. The government does *not* do this at present – indeed in relation to transport it does the opposite. At present under 1% of transport capital funding is cycling investment, given which it is something of a miracle that around 2% of work trips are already made by bicycle in Scotland!

The government [and indeed, we regret to say, the Finance Committee!!] have consistently over several years rejected the evidence-based recommendations of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee at the time of the annual budget, for a substantial rise in active travel funding.

Furthermore, the *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland [CAPS]*⁵, much lauded by Ministers, and despite some valuable content, sets no clear, funded and evidence-based path to its worthy but highly ambitious target of 10% of trips by bike by 2020. Indeed, Spokes has shown, on the basis of compelling evidence, that the government has no hope whatsoever of meeting that target under current funding levels. [See Spokes submission on the Draft Scottish Budget 2011-12⁶]. It is disturbing that Ministers continue to proclaim the target, given this absence of a laid-out, evidence-based and funded path, and when the evidence points in the opposite direction!

The above Spokes budget submission made clear proposals for the minimum levels of funding needed to have any hope of reaching the government target, and on how this investment could be managed. It is pleasing to note that our calculations of requisite minimum average funding per year up to 2020 (around £50m per year for cycling investment alone) correspond nicely to the RPP proposals, which average around £100m per year for active travel in total (walking+cycling) - though the RPP wisely weights its proposal towards the early years.

Q4-Q7 We have no major comments relevant to these questions.

We trust our comments will be of use to the Committee and thank you again for this opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu
for Spokes

³ *Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North America, and Australia* by David R. Bassett, Jr., John Pucher, Ralph Buehler, Dixie L. Thompson, and Scott E. Crouter [*Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2008, 5, 795-814] [downloadable at <http://www.8-80cities.org/Articles/Walk%20Bike%20Obesity%20Rates.pdf>]

⁴ <http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/> - click on 'publications'

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/316212/0100657.pdf>

⁶ *Spokes submission on draft budget 2011-12* <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/1011-budget-submission.pdf>