



John Swinney MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and  
Sustainable Growth  
Scottish Government  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG

Scottish Environment LINK  
2 Grosvenor House  
Shore Road  
Perth  
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804  
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org  
www.scotlink.org

25<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Scottish Environment LINK held its annual Congress on 17-18 November and as a result of our discussions it was agreed that we should write to you to indicate our concerns on key matters relating to the draft Scottish Budget. LINK urges you to consider these issues which our Congress felt were being threatened by the levels of funding proposed within the draft Budget. LINK has 36 member bodies, with a combined membership of around 500,000, and we believe that we reflect the concerns of a large section of the Scottish population in seeking these changes to the draft Budget.

### **Active Travel**

Many member bodies of LINK are engaged in work relating to different aspects of the Report on Proposals and Policies, a programme which was warmly welcomed by many LINK organisations. However, Congress was particularly concerned at the proposed decrease in funding levels for walking and cycling within the draft Budget. This reduction, to less than 1% of the transport budget, contradicts the Government's own manifesto commitment to increase spending on active travel (p35). In terms of preventative spend, we believe that encouraging more people to walk and cycle for short journeys will result in enormous benefits across Scotland.

It makes no sense from a health or environmental perspective to cut this funding, while increasing spending on roads. There is clear evidence from other European countries that sustained, high levels of investment in walking and cycling leads to greater numbers of people choosing to travel actively, with all the related health and environmental benefits, including lower climate change emissions as people switch away from motorised vehicles for shorter journeys. Furthermore, over 100 health and transport interests in the UK, including the Association of Directors of Public Health, have said that at least 10% of transport budgets should be spent on facilities for walking and cycling. Scotland's track record on this issue is embarrassing to the point of recklessness. We cannot go on, year after year, spending around a meagre 1% of the transport budget on walking and cycling infrastructure without profound consequences for the health and well-being of society.

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We urge the Government to set out a phased programme for greatly increasing the proportion of transport funding that is spent on walking and cycling. We believe this should rise to close to 10% of the transport budget by 2014, the year of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The Scottish Government is committed to delivering physical activity legacy benefits, throughout Scotland, as a result of these Games. Promoting greatly increased levels of walking and cycling, across the population as a whole, should be a key element of this legacy but will be difficult to achieve without a substantial improvement in the path infrastructure. A top priority should be the construction of off-road walking and cycling routes to connect communities together and to reduce dependency on motorised transport.

An additional benefit of switching spending away from a relatively small number of large-scale capital road projects to a major programme for the construction of walking and cycling facilities, is that this will help support local business and stimulate increased levels of employment across the whole country. Public investment in such programmes has been a major feature of US Government policy both now and in the 1930s during periods of economic downturn. Scotland should lead the way in demonstrating to the other UK nations how a similar programme can deliver great economic, social, environmental and health benefits.

This is not the only Budget issue to cause serious concern among our members and we will be writing to you under separate cover about the proposed cuts to Scotland's important agri-environment budget.

Thank you for your consideration of the above issues. We would of course be very happy to discuss them further with you at any time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Long  
Chair

cc Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Deputy First Minister  
Keith Brown MSP Minister for Housing and Transport  
Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change  
Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport