

SPOKES FUNDING SURVEY 10/11: COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL OFFICERS

NOTE: Comments identifying specific councils and/or persons have been anonymised

Responses to Q16: "Give any comments on funding methods for cycle project capital expenditure. Consider small/medium/large cycle projects and integrated cycle/public transport projects. What changes would overcome the problems?"

It is fortunate this year, when taking account of the CWSS budget reduction, other funds have been obtained that will ensure a continued level of investment in cycle facilities. When considering the Sustrans contributions, the CWSS budget is significant, as it has facilitated the awards by enabling match funding. With Council resources being targeted at maintaining the existing road network, it is direct funding from the Scottish Government for Cycle or Cycle/Walk projects that is of utmost importance as it allows the development and implementation of such infrastructure.

The issue with delivering large scale cycle projects e.g. NCNx is multiple land owners. Land negotiations can often be very time consuming/expensive resulting in difficulties delivering grant funded projects within the required timescales. Given budget cuts and the level of damage on the local road network following two severe winters it is unlikely that there will be any significant capital money allocated from the Council's budget for cycle projects in the next few years as maintaining/repairing the road network will be a priority. Therefore the CWSS/Sustrans grants will be vital for the delivery of new cycle projects in the region going forward. Will also investigate other possible funding sources for financial year 2011/12 e.g. Woods in and around Towns, ERDF, Paths for All.

As stated in 2009/10 it would be beneficial if Sustrans could distribute larger sums of money and allocate funding earlier in the year to allow works to be planned and implemented during the summer months when weather conditions are more favourable. Realistically, it is not feasible for Local Authorities to have detailed designed schemes sitting on the shelf ready to go out at very short notice. We have found that resolving land issues can have a detrimental effect on the speed of producing a scheme.

The Scottish Government's Cycle Action Plan sets ambitious targets for future cycle use but says very little about funding. Without substantial, ring-fenced funds it is unlikely that these targets will be met. There needs to be sustained, long-term investment in the provision of cycle facilities in order to encourage modal shift.

Committing spends or being able to spend funding over a number of years as opposed to being restricted to single financial years. Larger cycle projects can take a number of years to construct due to land issues, getting permissions, tendering, planning and designing projects.

Funding cycle projects from carriageway, street lighting and footway maintenance budgets, and from Developer Section 75 contributions. [Spokes note - I think he means this would help, rather than that it happens a lot already in his council]

There is less money available so inevitably there is greater pressure to deliver more for the funding you are given, a standardised cost/benefit analysis may help justify cycling projects in this climate. It is still as difficult to conceive, design, consult on and construct anything more than a small scheme within the financial year, however funding is generally allocated on a yearly basis. The SCSP and Connect2 projects have allowed an escape from this and hopefully, when complete, will prove successful enough to help move funding models towards long term planning.

Obviously increased funding with less constrained timeframe for spend to enable larger, more complex projects to be developed. However recent changes to criteria for Sustrans funding and Cycling Scotland taking forward CAPS Forum etc are good though appears to be some overlap between these organisations.

Need ring fenced cycling funding to achieve caps targets

<p>With an increasing number of on and off road cycle routes the lack of an identifiable maintenance revenue stream is becoming an increasing issue. Ideally a pro-rata rate for each LA could be established alongside the existing CWSS quota.</p>
<p>The previous loss of the Schools, Home Zones & 20's Plenty ring fenced monies was to the detriment of cycling/walking schemes, as it removed a reasonable amount of money which would otherwise have been directed specifically at such schemes.</p> <p>The potential cessation of the ring-fenced Cycling Walking and Safer Streets (CWSS) allocation is of great concern, as in previous years it proven to be very helpful in providing certainty for medium-term planning of cycle schemes and to enable the programming of potential schemes for the year ahead at an early date. However, the loss of CWSS funding in the future would remove that certainty, and to revert to year-by-year budgets would be a retrograde step, as we would lose the ability for forward planning. In addition, if we entered into a new financial year before we had our funding confirmed it would potentially delay further the tendering/award of new works.</p> <p>Coupled with the significant spending cuts (CWSS budget reduced by 20%, 2011/2012) that are anticipated across local authorities, that problem will only be severely exacerbated, as any centralised funding would likely be prioritised to other Council services, and Roads budgets would likely be primarily targeted towards network maintenance.</p> <p>The arrangement for seeking grant funding from Sustrans helps to offset these potential funding shortfalls, particularly for larger schemes. However, if Sustrans funding were to be reduced it would be to the detriment of all local authorities. However, any funding bids to Sustrans will likely be subject to a bidding process, so there would still be no guarantees as to how much any LA would get from that source.</p> <p>The reduction in funding to Sustrans, if that is indeed the case, appears contrary to many of the Government's own initiatives, including the climate change initiative, tackling obesity and inactivity indicatives, and the National Transport Strategy, which highlights the need to support and improve sustainable travel choices, with a consequential reduction in car-borne travel. Any reduction in the level of funding to Sustrans, and such other streams, will be to the detriment of promoting and facilitating more sustainable travel choices.</p>
<p>A guarantee of funds on longer term basis would help to maintain investment in cycling and walking facilities. The uncertainty each year, particularly with the Sustrans funding means that by the time the funding is confirmed it is almost too late to implement the scheme that financial year.</p>
<p>Some 'short link' projects can run into difficulty due to excessive legal issues (redetermination orders, land ownership etc) exacerbated by stringent expenditure deadlines. If this process could be simplified, more of our already scarce staff and financial resources could be directed towards creating and improving infrastructure.</p>

Summary of topics mentioned in at least 2 responses in the above table

[in order of number of mentions]

- (a) Top issue – need for continued ring-fenced/significant funding, CWSS and Sustrans – without this many councils will invest little/nothing in cycle projects.
- (b) Assurance of long-term funding, not just year-by-year
- (c) Land ownership problems can be big setback/ delays/ costs – particularly difficult in relation to absence of assured long-term funding for cycle projects – relates to (b).
- (d) Council transport capital increasingly dedicated to road maintenance, leaving little/none for bike projects – relates to (a)
- (e) Councils increasingly investigating other funding sources to top-up or match other bike project funds – including ERDF, Paths for All, Woods in and around Towns (what's that!), Lottery, own road maintenance budget, Leader, lottery, etc.
- (f) Government announces aims/targets on such as cycle use, obesity, transport emissions, for councils to work on, but doesn't resource it.

Responses to Q15: "If you anticipate significant changes in your cycling investment sources/levels in 2011/12 please describe briefly."

<p>Whilst the CWSS fund has been reduced for 2011/12, Council has been successful in obtaining match funding grant awards from Sustrans to the value of £32,600 for the installation of cycle parking facilities at schools and the creation / improvement of shared cycle/pedestrian paths. Also granted, is an award of from the regional transport partnership for the installation of a Toucan Crossing at a location where a pedestrian/cycle route crosses a busy distributor route. Thus, overall spending on cycle or cycle/walk facilities will be on course to surpass the 2010/11 total.</p>
<p>The main sources of investment are CWSS/Sustrans and it has been indicated that we will receive a reduced allocation in 2011/12 although funding is yet to be confirmed.</p>
<p>The spending that would be allocated in sections 10 and 11 above will be more or less the same in 2011/12. We are still at the bidding process for Sustrans funding for 2011/12.</p>
<p>Smarter Choices, Smarter Places funding ended in March 2011 though £30k now secured from Scottish Government to continue with project for first quarter of 2011/2012.</p>
<p>Block funding is expected to increase to £600K whilst CWSS will reduce to £686K.</p>
<p>Downward pressure on revenue and capital budgets year on year which reduces ability to find match funding for cycling related projects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CWSS budget for 2011/12 will be £317K • We have recently been successful in securing £453,000 of external funding from a variety of sources as part of a 3 year project commencing in April 2011 as part of a 'Green and Active Travel Improvements' ERDF application. This funding will be spent on developing some key cycling links identified as priorities in the Active Travel Audits, Cycle parking and a series of active travel maps for each 8 towns which had an Audit undertaken
<p>There will be a significant reduction in the overall amount available for cycle route investment during 11/12 as the current ERDF funded sustainable travel town project come to a close.</p>
<p>CWSS budget down by Approx. 20%, less funding expected from Sustrans</p>
<p>In line with the Council's decision to accept the terms of the Local Government Settlement 2011/12, the Council's Revenue Budget for 2011/12 was constructed to include cost pressures and savings arising from the settlement offer. As a result each Service within the Council had to identify savings options and these were presented to the full Council at its Special Meeting on 17 February 2011. With regard to the Traffic & Road Safety Team (the team where the role of sustainable transport lies), its Traffic Revenue budget was cut by 70%, with the result being that we are no longer in a position to promote sustainable transport. The savings also included the loss of the post of Sustainable Transport Officer.</p>
<p>I am expecting to receive funding for another 2 sections of the X Cycle Route estimated cost of £200,000</p>
<p>100k funding from the council for 2011/12 for X Shared Access Route. No confirmed future budget in subsequent financial years.</p>
<p>100k funding from Sustrans for 2011/12 for Y Shared Access Route.</p>
<p>We have approximately £457,000 of Big Lottery funding available for 2011/2012. This is to create NCN_x between A and B. This will be done by widening the existing cyclepath and reducing the width of the carriageway on the road that links A and B. However, to complete the project the road carriageway will have to be altered too. The Council will therefore finance and carry out on the road works at a cost of £278,514.30. The estimated costs for the provision of the (wider) cycle path / narrower road is therefore £722,134.</p>
<p>There has been a significant reduction in funding for 2011/12. Only CWSS and no Sustrans.</p>
<p>This figure is likely to decrease, given severe budget cuts and the mandatory expenditure associated with the speed limit review and disabled parking places requirements.</p>

Summary

With a few exceptions, councils are expecting lower cycle investment in 2011/12 as compared to 2010/11. This is a realistic expectation given the substantial cuts in the two main sources of council cycle project investment: total CWSS is being cut from £9.09m to £7.458m, and Sustrans funding is down from £7.5m to £5.4m.