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Ms Alison Johnstone MSP
The Scottish Parliament
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Dear Alison,

Thank you for your letter of 7 January expressing the concerns of the Cross Party Group on Cycling in relation to the Town Centre Action Plan.

As lead Minister overseeing delivery of the plan, I am being supported by senior policy officials from all directorates within government. I would like to take this opportunity reconfirm our commitment to furthering opportunities for active travel in the context of town centre accessibility.

As I stated in the Parliamentary debate on 16 January, the plan itself is intended as a foundation for future activity and it does identify that sustainable transport options are key in terms of ensuring access to our town centres, including the action supporting active travel options and the masterplanning toolkit.

Our immediate focus is on the establishment of a working group with COSLA to further define the EAG's recommendation of a Town Centre First Principle, as well as discussion with interested bodies about demonstration projects that have been identified within the plan.

Within the Scottish Government, we are working with Sustainable Transport and Planning colleagues to ensure that active and sustainable travel remain central to Scotland's vision for its town centres. We will be discussing, for instance, the cross over between urban centre and cycling agendas in relation to the extra £20 million of new funding for cycling infrastructure identified over the next two years in the 2014/2015 Draft Budget.

With regard to SPOKES, I can confirm that we have received a letter from Mr Dave du Feu, spokesperson for the group. My officials have replied to Mr du Feu offering the opportunity to meet with him and hear some of the suggestions he has on active travel in and between town centres.

As you'll be aware, the Proposed NPF3 was laid in parliament on 14 January and alongside this I have published a Position Statement on the progress of the review of Scottish Planning Policy. The draft SPP, published for consultation from 30 April to 23 July 2013, underlines a number of policy principles for promoting sustainable and active travel. Among these is the expectation that the planning system should support patterns of development which provide safe and convenient opportunities for both walking and cycling. We are taking account of all the consultation responses as we finalise the SPP for publication in the summer.

Furthermore, subject to my diary, I would be happy to consider an invitation to attend a future meeting of the Cross Party Group on Cycling to discuss how we might integrate cycling improvement into the planning system.



DEREK MACKAY