

Debate on Town Centres Action Plan – 16.1.2014

Meeting of the Parliament 16 January 2014

- The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08769, in the name of Derek Mackay, on the town centre action plan. The minister has up to 10 minutes. We are very tight for time.

CYCLING EXTRACTS IN RED BELOW

Sarah Boyack:

We need the capacity to get on with this work, and that is why I believe that the action plan needs to be more ambitious. For example, we need better bus connections and better walking and cycling infrastructure. Can the minister explain why walking and cycling are seen as long-term issues to be addressed? Spokes makes the obvious point that, if we have better facilities and better access to our town centres, that will lead to more attractive opportunities.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Derek Mackay: To answer the very point, I say that I absolutely agree with the member about local authorities. That is why we are waiting for their response. What I have published is the Government's response. The member is absolutely right about the actions that require to be taken by local authorities.

Sarah Boyack: Right. I thought that the minister might have come in on the cycling point, but there is always the summing-up speech at the end.

.....
16:36

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): The town centre first principle—to put the health of town centres at the heart of a thriving local economy—is very welcome. I find it strange that we thought differently in the past and strange that we thought that making anything other than the town centre the most important place for people to shop, meet, socialise and enjoy was a good idea.

...
Walking and cycling access to town centres should be given more priority and I have written to the minister about that on behalf of the cross-party group on cycling. As Sarah Boyack said, walking and cycling access is the only action that the Government deems to be long term when it should be designed in from the start of any improvements.

.....
Sarah Boyack: (summing up for Labour)

On Tuesday, we debated climate change. Yesterday, we debated health. If the Scottish Government is serious about its target that 10 per cent of all trips should be made by bike within the next six years, town centres are critical to that. Joined-up Government thinking is needed.

Promoting town and city centres could help to address our wider policy ambitions on public health, community involvement and ownership, and economic regeneration for our communities. However, we must link in local businesses and entrepreneurs. We must focus on the needs and opportunities.

.....
Derek Mackay: (summing up)

Sarah Boyack and Alison Johnstone mentioned accessibility in our town centres, and focused on cycling. The Government will give that further thought and deliberate on how we might take that forward. I know that four ministers were represented at a recent meeting on cycling. As I said, we will give it further thought.