

30.10.14

Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2015-16 .. Submission from Spokes

- 1 Role of ICI Committee
- 2 Budget speech - what does "additional" £10m for "infrastructure" mean?
- 3 Active travel funding 14/15 and 15/16 – our current estimates
- 4 National Indicators
 - 4.1 Reduce Scotland's Carbon Footprint
 - 4.2 Reduce traffic congestion
 - 4.3 Increase the proportion of journeys to work by public or active travel

Our response gives essential background [1-3] then [4] addresses the Committee's focus¹ on 3 National Indicators²

1 Role of ICI Committee

For several years the Scottish Parliament Committees (in various incarnations) dealing with transport firmly recommended a higher share of the Scottish transport budget for active travel^{3,4}. The Committees, however, never had the courage to state *from where within transport this rise should come*. As a result the Finance Secretary and Finance Committee were unwilling to consider the recommendation, and made clear that this was the reason.

Spokes has repeatedly made this point to the Committee and in other ways – for example our strongly worded article *Scottish Budget Process Fails – Again!*⁵ The Committee excused itself on the understandable grounds that the budget is too opaque to propose any amendments. However, that is not good enough - it means **the Committee knows that its recommendations to raise active travel funding will not be considered.**

Our ICI 13/14 budget submission⁶ suggested options for funding sources within the transport budget. Further, if £3bn is available to dual the A96, plus £3bn for the A9, then slight postponement of some construction (for example, while average-speed-cameras are tried) could easily multiply current active travel investment.

In conclusion, if the Committee is again persuaded of the case to raise the active travel % of transport spend, then it must seize this nettle and indicate *how the budget can be modified*. If the Committee does not do so, then government will assuredly again dismiss any ICI recommendations on matching its transport investment priorities with its active travel ambitions and its 2020 cycle-use ambition.

Secondly, the Committee and its predecessors have, rightly, repeatedly asked for **clarity on active travel funding** [see, for example, appendix 1 in our above-referenced article *Scottish Budget Process Fails – Again*] yet this has never happened. There are indeed complexities, but some simplification is certainly possible. Indeed last year the Cabinet Secretary was able to provide a subsequent breakdown⁷ to Patrick Harvie MSP.

The most absurd example is that the *Sustainable and Active Travel* and the *Future Transport Fund* budget lines both cover very similar and overlapping expenditure types. Both include spending on active travel infrastructure, encouraging modal shift and other 'green transport' initiatives, yet the amounts going to these purposes from both budget lines are obscure. Since active travel expenditure probably accounts for (very roughly) 50% of the combined total of these two lines, far greater transparency would be achieved by replacing those two budget lines by one for *active travel* and another for *other future/green transport*.

2. Budget speech - what does “additional” £10m for “infrastructure” mean?

In his 9 October budget speech,⁸ the Cabinet Secretary stated (our emphases in bold)..

*Our overall investments in schools, digital infrastructure, energy efficiency, health and transport, including an **additional** £10 million next year for cycling and walking **infrastructure**, target projects that will make the economy more productive, with **assets** that deliver greater energy efficiency and better outcomes.*

The *additional* £10m promise on cycling and walking *infrastructure* for *asset creation* is very clear. One might therefore assume 15/16 will see £10m more than 14/15 for the type of 50/50 match-funded work which Sustrans undertakes with local authorities and other public bodies. That would be welcome, as improved infrastructure is key to more cycling and walking [4.1 below]. Our investigations, however, reveal something much less clearcut.

For infrastructure ?

Worst of all, we understand that £5m of the “additional £10m” is in fact the £5m *already announced in June*⁹, and announced *not for infrastructure but for behaviour change*. Second, in the budget document¹⁰ the other £5m is specified as 'Financial Transactions' - which SPICe Budget Bulletin¹¹ 14/70 [page 9] suggests can only be used “*beyond the public sector.*” Thus it is far from clear how much – if indeed any! - of the 'additional £10m' can be used for infrastructure work, and particularly that with local authorities and other public sector partners.

Additional ?

The new £10m is indeed additional in the sense that it is £10m more than had been indicated in advance for 15/16 in last year’s budget statement. However, quite apart from the fact that, as above, £5m of the £10m has already been announced, the £10m is not additional to **actual 14/15 cycling investment** – which the average listener would certainly understand from “*an additional £10 million next year*” in the speech.

Actual cycling investment in 14/15 included several ‘extras’ for infrastructure which are no longer available in 15/16: namely £7m from Forth Bridge underspend, and money from Barnet consequentials. Set against these extras in 14/15, the ‘additional’ £10m (even if it were entirely for infrastructure) would represent an actual decline of nearly £4m in infrastructure investment in 15/16 compared to 14/15.

3. Active travel funding 14/15 and 15/16 – our current estimates

Our best *estimate* of main government active travel funding sources is shown in the table [we exclude small sources not varying much year to year, total probably £1m or less, e.g. including Climate Challenge].

(£m) Budget line	Line total		AT element		Basis of our estimates
	14/15	15/16	14/15	15/16	
CWSS	8.2	8.0	6.2	6.0	We estimate 75% of CWSS is 'CW' [cycle, walk: active travel], the rest 'SS' [safer streets: traffic management, etc].
SAT	29.0	25.0	18.0	24.0	14/15: £18m = £4m core + £10m 2014bgt + £4m Barnet. 15/16: £24m = £4m core + £10m 2014bgt + 'additional' £10m
FTF	18.8	20.3	4.5	5.0	15/16 £5m provisional [JS letter to Patrick Harvie]
Forth bridge	In <i>trunk roads</i>		7.0	n/a	Forth bridge underspend [+ £5m for 15/16 in SAT above]
Trunk roads	639.0	695.0	4.6	2.0	Average £2m p.a. + £2.6m extra 'shovel-ready' Barnet in 14/15
Total active travel funding			40.3	37.0	We emphasise these are <i>estimates</i> , based on above assumptions
Estimate of infrastructure spend within the above			36.0	28.0	We assume all is infrastructure <i>except</i> SAT core £4m & [for the reasons in section 2 above] half of the 15/16 'additional' £10m'

Conclusion: Active travel funding falls in 15/16, and infrastructure falls most within that. Note however that, even at 14/15 levels, investment is far too low to achieve government 2020 cycle-use ambitions [4.1 below].

4 National Performance Framework indicators

4.1 Increase the proportion of journeys to work by public or active travel

Investment in infrastructure, and reducing car dominance, are key to boosting bike trips. [Cycle *promotion* is most likely to be long-term effective where infrastructure and traffic conditions are conducive to everyday cycle use].

Our Edinburgh experience over many years exemplifies this: see (A) of our submission¹² to the UK All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group inquiry, *Get Britain Cycling*. Cycle use rose in parallel with the growth of cycle facilities, at that time largely in the form of widespread coloured onroad lanes. At the same time car space was being cut, for example by new bus lanes. We emphasise our view, as in the submission, that it was not so much the impact of any particular cycle facility as their growing widespread visible presence, increasing public perception that cycling is a 'normal' and 'expected' way of getting about. We also emphasise that this can be a continuing process. Growth in cycle use in the city has raised its political acceptability - thus more ambitious, more attractive and more costly facilities become feasible politically, raising bike use further in a virtuous circle.

Countless surveys show fear of traffic as the top stated deterrent to using a bike. For those who do cycle, traffic conditions are again the main concern – not just moving traffic, but motor vehicles parked (some legal, some illegal) in advisory cycle lanes, forcing cyclists out of the lane into the traffic stream.

Main roads into city centres are generally the most direct and least hilly routes – they need segregated cycle facilities or, at the least, wide mandatory cycle lanes with no parking allowed. Elsewhere the default speed limit in all built-up areas should be 20mph - also with cycle facilities where appropriate.

Only growing investment can achieve this on a wide scale. Our 14/15 budget submission¹³ [section 1.3] provided evidence that cycle investment of £20 per head (£100m a year, 5% of the transport budget) could give some hope of realising the Scottish Government's 'vision' of 10% of all 2020 trips being by bike. With another year gone, at far lower investment levels, we see little chance for the 2020 ambition. Rising investment now could at least move Scotland in the right direction – instead of which it seems that 14/15 marked a peak, followed by decline.

Our calculation ties in with many other organisations. Active travel [walking+cycling] should receive 10% of total transport spend according to the report *Action on Active Travel*¹⁴ by the **Association of Directors of Public Health**, and supported by 110 transport, medical and other professional, expert and interested bodies¹⁵ ranging from the **Institute of Highway Engineers** to the **British Heart Foundation**. The 10% figure is also adopted by a range of Scottish national transport bodies in *Active Travel, Active Scotland*¹⁶.

We fully accept that *local authorities* have a funding role, but our annual surveys [e.g Spokes Bulletin 120¹⁷] suggest this requires a funding lead (as well, of course, as a political lead) from government. Also, government transport cash hugely outweighs that of councils - and it is government who set the 2020 10% cycle use ambition.

4.2 Reduce Scotland's carbon footprint

The 2020 10% cycle-use 'vision' (or '*target*' according to future First Minister **Nicola Sturgeon MSP**¹⁸) hardens into a 'milestone' in the Scottish Government's **Climate Change strategy, Low Carbon Scotland**¹⁹ [section 7.2.1]. Thus, the further the 10% is missed, the further are Scotland's already-breached climate change aims threatened.

Yet modal shift to cycling has huge potential. Cycling is the transport mode with lowest energy-intensity per person-km.²⁰ If conditions are right, cycling can replace many local car trips. For example, in the Netherlands 30% of trips to rail stations and to schools are by bike. Furthermore by appropriate social, planning and transport policies the need for longer trips can be reduced, thus giving cycling yet more potential.

4.3 Reduce traffic congestion

A very useful short referenced discussion of the role of cycling in relation to congestion is found in *Benefits of Investing in Cycling*²¹ by Dr Rachel Aldred. The facts below are referenced in that paper.

Page 19 [*reducing congestion*]: Even with the average 1.5 persons per car, cycling is 3 times more space-efficient than car per person-trip. When parked, 10-12 bikes can fit one car space (and 80% of onstreet time is parked).

Page 16 [*journey time reliability in congested conditions*]: Congestion means *unreliability*, not just slowness - yet predictable trip times, for goods and for meetings, are vital to business. Bike travel, and transport of goods, largely eliminates unpredictability - bike couriers offer short delivery times (and cheaper prices!) even at congested times. Bike travel and transport effects a congestion-reduced environment within conventional congestion. Gradually changing the proportions between these two environments would be *an innovative way to tackle congestion*

- 1 <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/81292.aspx>
- 2 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator>
- 3 Former TICC cttee
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- 4 <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/45089.aspx#anni>
- 5 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2012/12/scottish-budget-process-fails-again-2/>
- 6 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/1209-ICI-Cttee-Spokes-submission.pdf>
- 7 Letter from Finance Secretary John Swinney MSP to Patrick Harvie MSP
<http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/1309-JS-to-PH-12-Sep-13.pdf>
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- 12 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Get-Britain-Cycling-spokes-submission.pdf>
- 13 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/1310-Spokes-SP-ICI-13-14-Budget-submission.doc>
- 14 *Action on Active Travel*, Association of Directors of Public Health, April 2008, and 2012 update
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- 15 http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Take_Action_on_Active_Travel_sigs_June_2010.pdf
- 16 *Active Travel, Active Scotland*
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- 17 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/bulletin/>
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- 19 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/lowcarbon/meetingthetargets>
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- 21 http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/zuvvi/media/bc_files/campaigning/BENEFITS_OF_INVESTING_IN_CYCLING_DIGI_FINAL.pdf