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John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth
Scottish Government

26 November 2014

Dear Mr Swinney

Draft Budget 2015/16 – Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

Thank you very much for your letter of 20 November in reply to ours on the above matter.

Whilst there were several points that we were pleased to see in your letter we were disappointed that you skated over the one most crucial matter which we had raised. Namely, in your 9 October speech¹ to Parliament introducing the draft budget you promised, as stated in the Official Record ...

... an additional £10 million next year for cycling and walking infrastructure ...

Yet the budget document, and indeed your reply, make it clear that the budget, under any reasonable interpretation, does not currently include an additional £10m for cycling and walking *infrastructure*.

As we had identified, and as your letter confirms, the £10m comprises two sums of £5m. One of these is the complex 'Financial Transactions' money. We are grateful for the assurance in your letter that this is intended for 'capital,' therefore presumably for infrastructure, and that if the arrangements prove too complex then you will find that £5m from elsewhere in the transport budget.

However your reply confirms that the other £5m, as we had deduced, is the sum pre-announced in June *not* for infrastructure but for Smarter Choices (SCSP). This is a behaviour-change scheme (and indeed it includes bus and car-share as well as walking and cycling). We certainly do not object to £5m for SCSP and, as you say, this has been welcomed by many organisations and local authorities. Our point is that this is not money for infrastructure and so cannot count towards your £10m promise. That it will 'support and promote' capital projects is helpful, but is not relevant to your commitment.

Thus, in summary, the draft budget provides only an additional £5m for infrastructure, not the £10m promised in your statement to Parliament. In our view, therefore, either your promise to Parliament should be retracted or the draft budget should be adjusted to reflect what you said in the Chamber. We would be grateful to know if you accept this conclusion and will therefore, we trust, adjust the budget to ensure the full additional £10m for walking and cycling infrastructure.

¹ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9570#.VETpOhY55Wq>

Turning to other points in your letter..

You mention the **Future Transport Fund**, the allocation of which is not yet finalised. In 14/15 £4.5m of this Fund was allocated to Active Travel infrastructure, and a fairly similar sum, £5m, has been provisionally allocated for 15/16 - as stated in your letter² of 12 September 2013 to Patrick Harvie MSP. Clearly it would be possible to raise this by an additional £5m to £10m, thereby fulfilling your 9 October budget speech commitment. That however would almost certainly detract from other green transport measures, which we hope and trust you would not wish to do given the government's climate objectives.

We strongly welcomed³ the **£7m additional for infrastructure** in June of this year, which you mention. We trust that Keith Brown's successor as Transport Minister, Derek Mackay, will pursue similar opportunities as forcefully, and indeed with Keith Brown as his new boss that would seem likely. Nonetheless, no such sums are currently on the horizon, at least in public.

We welcome your continued commitment to the **2020 ambition** (which our new First Minister calls a 'target' in the Official Record⁴) for 10% of everyday trips to be by bike - albeit we cannot see how it can be achieved at current funding levels. No other country has achieved such a shift in such a short remaining time (although one or two cities may have done so) and certainly not with funding at under 2% of total transport spending. Without the 10% of transport spending recommended by the Association of Directors of Public Health⁵, and signed up to by over 100 professional, academic and other organisations⁶ there is certainly now little hope for 2020.

Finally, because it shows **the value of walking and cycling infrastructure budgets**, we take this opportunity to mention our recent public meeting on cycling developments in the Lothians – attended by nearly 150 enthusiastic members of the public, and chaired by Alison Johnstone MSP. A full report is here⁷. The standout impression from the evening was the hugely positive impact on the audience⁸ of West Lothian Council's 10 Community Links projects, to be built in 14/15 and 15/16 with 50/50 match-funding from Sustrans – i.e. government infrastructure money. Thanks to this 50/50 incentive the Council is itself finding £1.8m over the two years as its contribution. What impressed the audience was not just the sums involved but the utility of the projects – linking communities to each other and linking communities to rail stations and to other useful destinations – just the sort of project likely to boost everyday trips by bike. Although there were some tough questions from the floor to the West Lothian speaker, every single question began with congratulations - a unique experience for our public meetings!

This event and experience re-confirmed to us the value and importance of substantial and rising government funding for active travel infrastructure - so that many more local authorities can follow this example of West Lothian Council.

We look forward to hearing from you, and would particularly appreciate a clear response to our main point, on the previous page.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu
for Spokes

2 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/1309-JS-to-PH-12-Sep-13.pdf>

3 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2014/06/7m-new-active-travel-cash/>

4 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2013/02/1-by-2020-vision-or-target/>

5 <http://www.adph.org.uk/category/atpa/>

6 http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Take_Action_on_Active_Travel_sigs_June_2010.pdf

7 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2014/11/lothians-interest-packed-out-meeting/>

8 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2014/11/councillor-flabbergasted-or-the-importance-of-budgets-and-what-you-can-do/>