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28.1.17

Dear Committee Conveners above

## **Scottish Parliament Draft Budget 2017-18**

Having looked at your reports on the draft budget, we are writing with a couple of points on active travel investment and on preventative spend which we hope you will consider for this and future years.

### **Recommendations on Active Travel investment**

Spokes submitted [pre-budget evidence](#) to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee [RECC], which in the 2016-2021 Parliament has responsibility for transport matters. We are pleased that this evidence was taken into account in the Committee's deliberations and report, in [sections 131-135](#). The Committee rightly pointed out that its predecessor Committee had “*consistently called on the Scottish Government to increase budgets for active travel and associated infrastructure*” and we were delighted that the Committee effectively repeated this call, in section 135 ...

*“135. The Committee echoes the recommendations of the previous Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee and calls on the Scottish Government to set out how it can increase funding for active travel in order to make tangible progress towards meeting its stated targets.”*

Of all the transport issues discussed by the Committee (including rail, concessionary fares and ferries) this was the only one for which increased funding was specifically recommended.

However, this recommendation is not picked up or discussed in the Finance Committee report (although concessionary fares merit a section). Perhaps we have misunderstood the position, but we thought that part of the role of Finance Committee was to comment on recommendations from subject committees if they involve potential changes to the budget.

## Preventative Spend

There is rightly a focus on preventative spend in both the Finance and Health Committee reports, emphasising its importance and the need to ensure it is implemented effectively.

We are puzzled as to why active travel investment is not included in discussions on preventative spend. The first significant call for 10% of all transport budgets to be allocated to active travel was by the *Association of Directors of Public Health* in 2008 – [updated report 2010](#) signed by [over 100 partner organisations](#) – and the public health community remains in the forefront of calls for higher investment, for reasons of preventative health. Their report, after discussing obesity and health inequalities, states...

*“Walking and cycling have always been at the tail end of budget allocation and investment decisions. This must change. Walking already achieves 24% of all trips in Great Britain and cycling has been shown to have massive potential for growth. We call for 10% of transport budgets to be allocated immediately to walking and cycling.”*

and

*“This would be good for public health and save billions of pounds in future healthcare costs. Policies and strategies at all levels advocate walking and cycling but motor transport still takes priority in the big decisions and in the allocation of investment. As a consequence the UK lags badly behind many European countries in levels of active travel.”*

Although active travel is not mentioned in the Health Committee's budget scrutiny report, we are aware of their recent powerful [letter on obesity](#) to the Minister for Public Health and Sport. The letter explicitly sees action on obesity as preventative spend, and on active travel it points out that *“only 2% of the transport budget is spent on cycling and walking”* [in fact the percentage in the 17/18 draft budget falls to just 1.6%, due to a major rise in trunk roads spending, this rise alone being nearly four times the *total* for active travel for the whole of Scotland].

In summary we ask that the Health and Finance Committees, particularly during budget scrutiny, take full account of the potential of active travel as an important element of preventative spend.

We trust you will be able to consider our comments.

Yours sincerely

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Spokes