

Humza Yousaf, Minister for Transport & the Islands

20 March 2017

Dear Minister

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss cycling policy at our meeting on 15 March. We were encouraged by your clear personal appreciation of the importance of modal shift to cycling, for a range of reasons including health, climate, equalities and congestion; and by your pro-active intentions on active travel as expressed at the meeting.

This letter picks up on points you raised and clarifies one or two issues where we could perhaps have been a little clearer.

Segregated cycle-lane setbacks

The meeting was prompted in part by the setbacks which have occurred at Bearsway, Ayr and Roseburn (the latter now hopefully resolved) and your wish to prevent future similar problems.

We were therefore very pleased to hear that you have already pro-actively been meeting local authority transport spokespeople from your own party to explain and discuss the importance which the Scottish Government places on modal shift to cycling. If we understood you correctly you also intend, as soon as possible after the local elections, to speak to council leaders and transport conveners, if possible from every local authority, for the same reason. We encourage urgency in this, whilst the new councils are still developing their policies and programmes.

We pointed out that in both Bearsway and Roseburn it appeared that local councillors from the affected wards had perhaps not been sufficiently involved in initial discussions (they may or may not have been offered the opportunity) or how these related to the wider council and government agendas on active travel. Therefore these councillors had little background to rely on when local people and businesses started expressing hostility to schemes.

We also welcomed your initiative setting up the high-level Active Travel Task Force, chaired by Transport Scotland Chief Executive Roy Brannen, to identify and tackle the barriers to implementation of ambitious schemes. We expressed concern that a final report was not due until end 2017; and you agreed to look at timescales. We urge that initial recommendations are available in late summer before the next budget process begins, albeit that a final comprehensive analysis would probably come later.

Cycling and active travel investment

Like your predecessors, you promised to seek additional funding when opportunities arose, such as Barnett consequentials. Whilst that is welcome, we argued that one-off cash boosts are not a sufficient answer, and that substantial additional investment, continuing over the years (and allowing multi-year contracts for major schemes) as in successful European comparator countries, is essential, to enable widespread ambitious infrastructure and thereby to achieve modal shift. Such funding would also do more than any number of words and policy documents to convince local authority politicians, and other decision makers, of the level of importance which the government places on active travel.

You suggested that allocating a % of the transport budget to active travel would be an arbitrary approach. To expand on our response - the 10% figure has long been recommended, not just by environmental organisations in Scotland¹, but by a wide range of professional and academic bodies² - initially the Association of Directors of Public Health³. However, the 10% is far from arbitrary, since evidence from Europe and from the former English Cycle Demonstration Towns suggests that to achieve substantial and ongoing modal shift to cycling requires around £20 per person per year, which equates to 5% of Scottish transport spending. This is discussed further in the Spokes pre-budget submission⁴ to the Scottish Parliament. Whilst there is less evidence on walking, a similar level of investment would mean 10% of the transport budget for active travel as a whole.

Furthermore we made the point that the composition of Scottish transport spending as a whole should be re-assessed objectively, based on over-riding government priorities on health, climate, inequalities and a sustainable economy, rather than on the more limited political priorities which have resulted in high trunk road and very low active travel spending. You pointed out that there are contractual obligations, but clearly new contracts are entered into periodically, and the more objective approach we suggest could be adopted at any time for future decision-making.

You may have read, subsequent to the meeting, of the new CPRE report, *The end of the road? Challenging the road-building consensus*,⁵ based on an examination of 86 completed road schemes in England. We strongly recommend this report, which reinforces our view of the need for a major re-think in transport priorities and the transport budget.

Road Safety and enforcement

You raised the question of improving road safety for vulnerable road users. We confirm our view that the primary need is to address sources of road danger, rather than seeking to get walkers and cyclists to protect themselves. We particularly welcome the forthcoming Police Scotland 'ClosePass' initiative, which combines enforcement and education to reduce road danger at source.

As another example, we were very encouraged that you yourself raised with us the issue of Mark Ruskell MSP's proposed bill for a 20mph default speed limit for urban areas in Scotland; said you welcomed his initiative and looked forward to the issues being widely discussed in Scotland – although we appreciate that you are not at present committed to any particular outcome.

As regards enforcement, we shared with you some examples of issues that we and others have faced when reporting incidents to the police. Both the police and Procurator Fiscal can be helpful in pursuing incidents of bad driving, but the response is often patchy. It is not unheard of for cyclists to be told, 'if you weren't hit then there is no case to pursue'. Serious cases have also been dropped by the Procurator Fiscal because they 'aren't in the public's interest'. We were encouraged by your interest in this subject and your suggestion that a high level meeting could be set up between the relevant parties and cycling organisations - we would encourage this.

1 <http://www.cyclingscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Active-Travel-Active-Scotland-full-report.pdf>

2 http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Take_Action_on_Active_Travel_sigs_June_20101.pdf

3 http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Take_action_on_active_travel_20104.pdf

4 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1611-Spokes-extra-pre-budget-submission.pdf>

5 <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/roads/item/download/4851>

Staffing and Design

We emphasised the importance of a really forward-looking replacement for *Cycling By Design*, which will affect cycle infrastructure for years to come, and we urged that it applies to local authority schemes as well as trunk roads. We welcomed the very preliminary consultation that has taken place, but are keen to be involved during the preparation process, not just when a near-final draft is issued. We understand that the final version is due to be published around the end of 2017.

We are also concerned about the capacity of local authorities to design, develop, consult on and implement ambitious cycle schemes on a sufficiently wide scale to achieve significant modal shift. Even the larger authorities have a great deal of admin in preparing funding bids, particularly for Community Links Plus, and for small councils it can be an impossible task. Even where consultants are brought in, a great deal of instruction and monitoring by senior council staff remains essential. Furthermore, the fact that only one or perhaps two CL+ bids for the whole of Scotland each year will succeed results in a huge amount of wasted effort - and potentially demoralisation and reluctance to prepare future such bids.

Thank you again for the meeting. We look forward to continuing involvement and are also delighted that you will be able to speak at this year's Pedal on Parliament.

Yours sincerely

David Brennan
Dave du Feu
Sally Hinchcliffe

for Pedal on Parliament