

If replying by email, please use... davedufeu@gmail.com

Scottish Government Debate: The Promotion of Walking and Cycling as Active Travel in Scotland¹ Tuesday 31 October, 2017

This debate follows the announcement of doubled active travel investment, and other initiatives, as discussed in our website article². This paper lists a number of issues we hope will be considered in the debate – the most important of which is probably how the new funding should be used and allocated.

ISSUES CLOSELY RELATED TO THE NEW INVESTMENT

- ◆ The top priority for investment must be **high quality infrastructure** for **everyday walking and cycling**, and **primarily in built-up areas** as this is where the bulk of people live and where journeys tend to be of suitable length.
- ◆ The government has not stated through which channels the investment will be implemented, and this needs clarified. Given the promised funding for all 5 short-listed Community Links Plus projects, it looks as if a significant proportion will go to **Sustrans Community Links**, and we support that.
- ◆ It is vital that the **CWSS fund** (Cycling, Walking, Safer Streets) is retained – and increased at the very least to £10m. Since having been cut by early SNP governments, it has still not even returned to the £9m p.a. inherited from the previous Lab/Lib government. Whilst we appreciate the government's reluctance to ring-fence, CWSS ensures that every Council does at least take some action on AT and does retain some AT skills. It has been a very successful scheme, and many Council cycle officers, especially in the smaller Councils, have told us they consider it essential to their Council's work on AT. The fact of the big total AT investment rise must not be used as an excuse to scrap CWSS, and government assurances on this are needed.
- ◆ Consideration should be given to some AT capital for **Regional Transport Partnerships**, to help ensure high quality cross-boundary AT provision. Also, it can be difficult for smaller local authorities to muster the necessary skills and resources; regional-level expertise and investment could help. Furthermore, local authorities understandably prioritise investment in their populated heartlands, but a cross-boundary perspective is vital for longer-distance cycle commuting and for tourism and leisure cycling.
- ◆ After years of continuing local authority staffing cuts and reorganisations we are very concerned as to whether Councils have **adequate resources, including staff, expertise and match-funding**, to make use of the new investment. Government must ensure this is not a stumbling block to effective use of the new investment. In Edinburgh, for example, several major cycle projects (e.g. Meadows to Canal and onstreet secure bike storage) are literally years behind schedule, which we believe is due in significant part to continual staff cutbacks and restructuring.

¹ bb.parliament.scot/#20171031

² <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2017/09/scottish-government-activates-active-travel/>

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR THE ACTIVE TRAVEL DEBATE

[not in any particular order]

- ◆ **Carrots and sticks.** Whilst the new investment is hugely welcomed there is strong evidence that achieving significant modal shift requires sticks as well as carrots. For example, this article³ by transport academic Dr Steve Melia. 'Sticks' can include roadspace re-allocation, with the dual function of allowing high quality protected cycling infrastructure. Regulatory measures such as parking restrictions can be very effective (e.g. Steve Melia article). The Scottish Government should also give Councils powers to introduce **premises parking levies**, dependent on the number of car park spaces over a certain minimum – this should cover retail developments, leisure centres, etc, not just workplace parking.
- ◆ **Planning policy.** Development in inappropriate locations, or development that doesn't provide AT infrastructure up front is a major problem and wasted opportunity. Whilst local planning falls largely to Councils, ultimately the government sets the purpose of planning and should be sending a much stronger message to local authorities and developers as to the location of development and the standards expected for AT provision. Furthermore, major new developments should include local facilities such as shops and pubs so that people don't have to travel far (ie by car) to get to general amenities.
- ◆ **From the outset.** AT must be incorporated – *and funded* - from the outset in all road, rail and other infrastructure projects. This is a government failure⁴ as much as any local authority. For example, the Bathgate-Airdrie rail reopening, under Transport Scotland, took place with a silo mentality such that the new rail stations were not connected by AT infrastructure to nearby towns, thus building in car-dependence from the outset, and leaving it up to the local councils to scabble around for cash for many years after in order to provide these routes. More recently, high quality cycling infrastructure at the proposed Sheriffhall roundabout rebuild was not a major consideration from the outset and is only now promised following major campaigns⁵ including a petition to the Scottish Parliament. Regarding trunk roads, we still await the long-promised update⁶ to the **Trunk Roads Cycling Initiative**, introduced by then Transport Minister Lord James Douglas-Hamilton in 1996(!) and never since updated
- ◆ **E-mobility** Major effort and increasing funding at UK, Scottish and Council levels is now going into encouraging and providing for a shift from fossil vehicles (FVs) to EVs. Yet individuals and businesses are being presented only with the option of FV-->EV and their attention is not even drawn to the option of moving instead from FV to e-bike and/or cargo-bike, though this (sometimes in combination with car club) can be a very viable option where most trips are local – and could make a huge difference to town centre liveability, congestion and pollution. The current approach is yet another example of silo mentality, rather than taking the opportunity of this major change to build in the option of moving away from motor vehicles altogether, where appropriate. Furthermore, roughly half of motor vehicle particulate emissions are from tyre wear, disc brakes, road dust, etc and thus EVs are emissions-reduced, not emissions-free. For more detail of this proposal, see our paper on e-mobility⁷ - originally written for Edinburgh City Council, but also submitted to Transport Scotland.

3 <http://www.stevemelia.co.uk/smarterchoices.html>

4 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1708-Roy-Brannen-mtg-final-agenda-ideas.pdf>

5 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2017/06/double-deputation/>

6 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/1510-to-DM-re-Trunk-Rd-Cycling-Initiative.pdf>

7 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/1708-CEC-EV-FRAMEWORK-spokes-response.pdf>

- ◆ **Cycle Tourism** This already contributes a lot to the Scottish economy⁸ both in terms of attracting visitors and encouraging 'holidays at home' (as well as benefiting health, emissions, etc) – but far more could be done in terms of cycle route and bike/rail infrastructure and promotion. This is a major potential growth area, with many parts of rural Scotland ideal for cycle tourism if the infrastructure was better and safer. Spokes members tell us of much superior cycling infrastructure and tourism/leisure promotion in other countries – recently, for example, *“South Tyrol in north Italy where cycle tourism has been promoted through lengthy segregated, cycle paths and trains with large, dedicated cycle carriages. The result is that cycle tourism is a big success and a significant contributor to the economy of this region.”*
- ◆ **Bike/rail** Bike/rail on-train capacity is probably the topic that raises more response to Spokes than any other. Our most popular tweet ever⁹ (with 175 retweets, including from tourist providers) was about the then-planned reduction in bike capacity on the Oban line. Planned capacity on the forthcoming **HST trains** between the Central Belt and northern cities remains very disappointing, with only 4 spaces at intermediate stations¹⁰ (as on current trains) plus 6 spaces for end-to-end journeys, compared to the initial promise of 20 spaces¹¹. More positively, for **rural areas**, there is a cryptic statement in the Programme for Government¹² of *“dedicated carriages for cycles and outdoor sports equipment on rural routes in the north and west.”* If this actually means what it implies – an additional coach for trains on these routes - that does sound extremely positive, but so far the government has given no details of exactly what it does mean.
- ◆ **Active travel access to stations** In terms of encouraging bike use for local trips, and reducing car use, high quality routes to stations are an obvious target. Transport Scotland could promote (including funding and design assistance) one exemplar high quality station route in every local authority. This could be a big bold initiative, something for the Minister to be proud of and to generate national publicity. We have suggested to Transport Scotland, as a first project, connecting Melrose, Borders Hospital and surrounds to Tweedbank station, together with bike and e-bike hire, as an alternative to expanding the car park. This general policy could be accompanied by a modest charge for all-day car parking (as already happens at some stations) so that people who lived within a few miles would be further encouraged to cycle or walk.
- ◆ **Procedural improvements** We understand that local authorities and Sustrans have asked Transport Scotland for procedural improvements which could help speed up infrastructure provision, whilst still allowing for detailed consultation with stakeholders. One example is an option for Experimental TROs (ETROs) to last longer than 18 months, which is insufficient time to undertake and experiment, evaluate it, and process a subsequent permanent TRO – meaning wasted time, money and effort in temporarily reinstating the original road layout, and acting as a disincentive to experiment.
- ◆ **Technical advice/standards** We are concerned at the length of time being taken to come up even with an early draft of the planned revision to *Cycling by Design*,¹³ and the lack of clarity still on basic issues such as whether it will officially apply widely or only to trunk roads - as does the present version, despite being widely referenced by councils and others. The need for high quality universally-applicable advice and standards is urgent.

Dave du Feu
Spokes
October 2017

8 <http://mediacentre.visitscotland.org/pressreleases/cycling-revolution-2098699>

9 <https://twitter.com/SpokesLothian/status/707577506317078528>

10 <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-11432>

11 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2017/05/highlands-n-e-bike-rail-cuts-parliament-debate-may-24/>

12 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2017/09/scottish-government-activates-active-travel/>

13 https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/33803/cycling_by_design_2010_rev_1_june_2011_.pdf