

## SCOTLAND UNITED FOR CLIMATE ACTION<sup>1</sup> – reception, 7 Jan 2025 Briefing note from Spokes

Transport is Scotland's highest emitting sector, and the disparity with other sectors has been growing<sup>2</sup>. This note lists two of the most effective actions which Scottish Government should now take on transport.

### TRAFFIC REDUCTION

The Scottish Government has a 'commitment' (not just 'target') to reduce car-km 20% by year 2030, documented in the [2018-2032 Climate Change Plan Update](#)<sup>3</sup> of December 2020. Spokes greatly welcomed this super-ambitious commitment, but it was [from the outset](#)<sup>4</sup> clear that it meant tough choices including demand-management.

The promised '[Route Map](#)'<sup>5</sup> to 2030 was (belatedly) published in draft in Jan 2022. Although the final version is still awaited, the government in December 2024 published commissioned research '[Traffic Demand Management Options](#)'<sup>6</sup> from AECOM consultancy. The report concludes "*it is likely that either locally or nationally implemented TDM schemes could achieve the 20% car-km reduction*" and "*in an equitable manner.*"

The research sets out four "deliverable" options for charging, not requiring novel technology. A further "key recommendation" is creating a "*Framework of Implementation for TDM measures*" - for example, common legal, technical and other standards to ensure interoperability between different local and/or national schemes, particularly if councils use existing powers to create local schemes prior to, or additional to, a national scheme.

In its [response](#)<sup>7</sup> to the research, the Scottish Government accepts that "*incentivising desirable behaviours is unlikely to be sufficient*" to reach the 20% traffic reduction. However it makes no commitment to demand-management actions, other than continuing discussions with local authorities and others. It places responsibility for action solely on local authorities and on the UK government (the latter in relation to petrol duty reform).

**Action 1:** The Scottish Government should immediately begin to implement the research recommendations, in particular, without delay, the key recommendation of creating the Framework for TDM implementation.

### ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING / DRAFT 25-26 BUDGET

Government moves towards traffic reduction have focused<sup>8</sup> on 'carrots' of improved active and sustainable travel. These are vital, alongside TDM – and, of course, also bring substantial public health and other desirable benefits.

Yet, despite this, the 2024 in-year funding cuts in the transport *revenue* budget were **solely in active travel!** And this was followed by severe, belated, and unannounced, [cuts in active travel capital](#)<sup>9</sup>, causing many problems for local authorities who had geared up staffing and planning for active travel infrastructure projects.

In total, the Scottish Government invested [£155m in active travel in 2024/25](#)<sup>10</sup> (under 4% of the transport budget), compared to the [£220m \(5.6%\) in the original 24/25 budget](#)<sup>11</sup>, and the [£320m or 10% originally promised](#)<sup>12</sup> by the Scottish Government for 24/25.

The draft 25/26 budget (£179m, 4.6%) only partially reinstates this cut, and furthermore [appears to exaggerate active-travel funds](#)<sup>13</sup> by inexplicably adding a £10m *Bus Infrastructure Fund* to the former ActiveTravel budget line.

**Action 2:** Raise active travel funding to £220m in the draft budget, with a stated intention to reach the full 10%

**Action 3:** To increase transparency, move the Bus Infrastructure Fund out of the Active Travel budget line and into a new line of its own, or one of the more appropriate other budget lines.

- 1 <https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/new-years-climate-resolutions-for-scottish-party-leaders/>
- 2 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Progress-in-reducing-emissions-in-Scotland-2023-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>
- 3 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/>
- 4 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2021/01/2021-active-travel-challenges/>
- 5 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>
- 6 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/travel-demand-management-options-study/>
- 7 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/context-and-scottish-government-policy-position-on-car-demand-management-and-transport-demand-management-research/>
- 8 <https://netzeronation.scot/take-action/travel-less-car>
- 9 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2024/12/2024-2025-what-for-active-travel/>
- 10 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/progress-update/bulletin-november-2024-active-travel-transformation/>
- 11 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2023/12/scotgov-budget-24-25-not-what-transport-needs/>
- 12 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/53417/cycling-framework-for-active-travel-a-plan-for-everyday-cycling.pdf>
- 13 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2024/12/scotgov-draft-budget-25-26-active-travel-cuts-disguised/>