City of Edinburgh Council, meeting 29 October 2026

Written deputation from Spokes
in support of Cllr Booth's motion[1], Congestion Charging Powers

Spokes wishes to express our strong support for this motion, which seeks to overturn the government's unwillingness to allow councils to make their own decisions on road-user charging.

As the motion states, the Council has a highly ambitious traffic-reduction target.

Reduced car use in the city centre and Edinburgh's town centres, as well as in residential areas, would be hugely beneficial in terms of danger, climate pollution, toxic pollution and noise, thus encouraging travel by walk, bike and bus, and greater social interaction in all such areas – whilst also providing improved road conditions for those for whom car is essential.

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government has shown that substantial car use reduction is possible[2] through any one of a number of means of road user charging (such as congestion charging).

Indeed, as long ago as 2020, in evidence to the Scottish Parliament , Chris Stark, then CEO of the UK Climate Change Committee, told MSPs that the car-km reduction "***will not happen*** *unless there is a combination of carrots and sticks, and the kind of policies (in the government's Climate Change Plan) are mainly carrots.*"

Yet this very same Scottish Government, through ending work on the necessary regulations, has now effectively banned councils from introducing such measures.

Such decisions should be for the local authority, not the government – and, indeed, the leader of Glasgow City Council, Councillor Ricky Bell, also of the SNP, has publicly slated[3] Transport Minister Stephen Flynn for the decision.

The government's decision, however, aligns with its own earlier decision, in a document intriguingly titled *Achieving Car Use Reduction*[4] (!), to scrap its 20% traffic reduction commitment. Moreover, the 20% reduction ambition is to be replaced by a target, not to reduce car-km at all, but to allow it to rise! - albeit with an aim (as yet unquantified) to limit the level of growth (see '*Traffic Growth Target*' on page 10 here[5]).

It is almost as if, unwilling to tackle ever-rising car growth itself, the government is seeking to prevent councils showing them up by demonstrating that it can be done!

We urge the Council to pass this motion, so that those Councils who wish to do so (which we hope will eventually include Edinburgh, ideally in conjunction with SEStran and surrounding councils) have all the necessary powers.

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1 https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s105017/Item%208.3%20-%20By%20Councillor%20Booth%20-Congestion%20Charging%20Powers.pdf
2 https://www.spokes.org.uk/2025/01/20-traffic-reduction-scotgov-research-shows-how/
3 https://www.thetimes.com/uk/scotland/article/snp-glasgow-council-stephen-flynn-road-use-charge-f989hts53
4 https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/achieving-car-use-reduction-in-scotland-a-renewed-policy-statement/
5 https://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/B140-pall.pdf