



Friends of the Earth Scotland Submission

# Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee Active Travel Inquiry

3rd December 2009

Friends of the Earth Scotland (FoES) welcomes the opportunity to make a formal submission to the Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's Active Travel Inquiry.

Question 1: What more can be done to encourage people to change their travelling habits and walk and cycle more?

FoES recognise that there needs to be a major culture shift in order to encourage people to walk and cycle more. While we are optimistic that this can be achieved, we believe a national, strategic plan that focuses not only on increased investment in active travel but also on measures to reduce car use, will be required. This is not only because decreased car use would reduce GHG emissions in itself but also because it would increase the attractiveness - and therefore uptake - of active travel alternatives.

Such a plan would therefore look at demand management measures such as congestion charging which many studies, such as the Eddington Review, have concluded to be the most effective way to reduce both congestion and climate emissions (when placed alongside corresponding investment in sustainable methods of travel).<sup>i</sup> It would also, importantly, look at the share of the transport budget that goes to active travel, public transport, and private motoring. At current levels only 1% of the transport budget goes towards active travel.<sup>ii</sup> ***FoES believes that this needs to be radically re-balanced so that at least 10% of spending goes towards active travel and that over 50% goes towards sustainable travel, including public transport.***

At current levels a vastly disproportionate percentage of transport spending goes towards large road building projects. While we recognise that cars are needed in specific situations, particularly in certain rural communities, the current focus on road building not only increases GHG emissions but, given many of the projects are city focussed (M74, AWPR, second forth road bridge), does little to benefit rural communities.

Question 2: Is enough progress being made in developing and delivering improvements in the uptake of walking and cycling?

No, Scotland has extremely poor rates of walking and cycling – particularly when placed against comparable European countries such as Holland and Denmark. At the same time, it is a national disgrace that we are the second most obese country in the world. Significant investment in active travel would help not only reduce GHG emissions but also have significant health benefits (not to mention the community and economic/tourism benefits that would come from 'people friendly' rather than 'car friendly' neighbourhoods and areas).

We fully support the Scottish Sustainable Development Commission analysis of the Government's poor track record on transport and associated call for a 'a sustained

movement of funding away from roads to public transport and particularly to active travel and demand reduction<sup>iii</sup>

Question 3: If not, what are the barriers to progress? (for example, lack of policy development, lack of political leadership, lack of funding/investment, the lack of prominence given to active travel in transport policy development, project planning and construction etc.)

There are several barriers to progress. First of all there is a clear ***lack of political leadership***. It is telling that where bold transport policies are put in place, such as in London and Stockholm, there was active and sustained political commitment and support. While there have been some positive steps recently from the current administration, the National Cycling Action Plan for example, we remain unconvinced that there is a real commitment to move investment at the levels required for active travel and a move towards a genuinely sustainable transport system.

Political parties of all colours also need to take on this challenge and spell out their vision for our transport system and the kind of communities they would like to see people live in. It is worth noting that while 25% of UK households don't own a car, this rises to nearly 80% for the poorest households and falls to 4% for the richest households<sup>iv</sup>. At the same time the poorest communities are disproportionately those cut in two by large roads running through them. Policies to benefit the car therefore benefit the rich, not the poor. We would like to see this environmental justice addressed through significant investment in active travel and similar measures that create safer and more pleasant communities. This could be done, for example, by creating 'home zone's' and other measures that 'civilise roads' making streets more pleasant for pedestrians and residents.

Similarly Scotland's planning system does very little to support increased walking and cycling. FoES believe that ***an integrated transport system that takes account of climate emissions and walking, cycling and public transport access rather than solely congestion, should be at the heart of the planning system rather than a peripheral consideration***. To give an example, the housing development in Leighton Buzzard, England ensured that real time public transport information monitors were placed within the kitchens of all houses, thereby making it quick and easy for residents to access public transport<sup>v</sup>. We would also support the concept of car free development projects that can provide a combination of lifestyle and mobility benefits, such as green space, a child friendly environment, car clubs and improved public transport.<sup>vi</sup>

Question 4: Why do walking and cycling policies set out in national, regional and local transport plans not result in a greater modal share for walking and cycling?

As previously mentioned we believe any commitment to active travel must be placed hand-in-hand with policies that reduce car use. Only by doing this can we make walking and cycling more attractive and maximise the potential of investment in active travel. Both the number of cars on our roads and the speed at which they travel disincentivises active travel for many.

Question 5: What further action is required by the Scottish Government, local authorities and other bodies to ensure that significant progress is made in the development and implementation of walking and cycling, particularly if transport is to make a greater and more meaningful contribution to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?

Alongside the suggested policies previously mentioned, and the more general re-balancing of priorities and investment, FoES would suggest the following measures.

In order to create safer, and more pleasant communities, where people feel walking and cycling are safe, attractive option, **speed limits should be brought down to 20 mph in pedestrianised areas and 50mph more widely**. Measures to enforce existing speed limits should also be looked at. In addition to the safety benefits, research suggests this could also deliver carbon savings of between 2.8 and 5.4 per cent<sup>8</sup>.

There should be much **greater investment in travel plans** – both in the workplace and in communities. Research from Sustrans as well as the Atkins report suggests these can lead to a modal shift of 10% at a very low cost.<sup>vii</sup>

Much needs to be done to **'normalise' active travel**. For example people living in tenements are often put off cycling through a lack of storage space or carrying a bike up the stairs. We would suggest that covered bike storage racks were provided on the pavement or in backgreen areas (ideally at the front of houses). This would not only provide a needed facility it would also normalise cycling and encourage uptake.

Similarly in this regard we would support street bike hire schemes as well as requiring cycling facilities such as bike racks and showers in new large developments.

Question 6: What can Scotland learn from good practice/successful implementation in other countries?

As previously mentioned, there is a need for political leadership in supporting active travel and other sustainable transport methods at the expense of private motoring. With this in mind Stockholm's congestion charge is interesting in that although it was put to a referendum the policy was trialled first thereby allowing the public to see the benefits of the scheme.

The Netherland's cycling rate is 25 times that of the UK.<sup>viii</sup> While cycling facilities and investment are correspondingly higher, cycling is also made safer by shared pavements rather than shared roads.

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i HM Treasury (2006) The Eddington Study, online at: [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/39A/41/eddington\\_execsum11206.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/39A/41/eddington_execsum11206.pdf)

ii The Scottish Government, 2007, The Scottish Budget 2006/2007

iii Third annual assessment of progress by the Scottish Government, online at: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=1027>

iv Measured by 10% of poorest and richest households. Office of National Statistics (2007), online at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1770>

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v <http://www.southbedsfoe.co.uk/images/exemplar%20travel%20site.pdf>

vi Enoch et al 2009 'Car-free development through UK community travel plans' in Urban Design and Planning Journal

vii Economic appraisal of local walking and cycling routes, Sustrans, September 2006; Atkins report online at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/26141950/0>

viii <http://cyclinginfo.co.uk/blog/cycling/cycling-rates-by-country/>