

# Transport in a net-zero future

A briefing on the need for a more sustainable transport system, and how we get there.

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**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

This document sets out a number of Friends of the Earth Scotland's proposals for achieving the kind of transport system Scotland needs to tackle climate change, and reduce the health impacts of pollution. While not a definitive list, these are tangible changes that politicians in Scotland can, and should, make in the near-term.

Details are set out below but, in brief, we recommend politicians should:

- Legislate for an end date for the sale of fossil fuel vehicles in Scotland of 2030, backed up by supporting measures, in line with advice from the UK CCC
- Set a date for the complete ban on fossil fuel vehicle traffic, beginning by turning Low Emission Zones into Fossil-Free Zones in city centres
- Increase resources for local authorities to disincentivise car use and invest in sustainable transport
- Increase the active travel budget year-on-year, while reducing spend on new roads

## The climate and health needs

Road transport is Scotland's biggest climate polluter. Greenhouse gas emissions from transport made up 37% of Scotland's total emissions in 2017<sup>1</sup>. Emissions actually went up from 2016, when traffic on Scottish roads consumed just over 3 million tonnes of petrol and diesel<sup>2</sup>, while every other sector made reductions in emissions. Total emissions from road transport are up on the 1990 base level<sup>3</sup>. This is a national shame, and is contributing towards the 'climate emergency' politicians have pledged to tackle.

There are nearly 3 million vehicles licensed in Scotland; the vast majority of these use fossil fuel. Car use is pervasive. But car use is an equalities issue, with people on the lowest incomes, people from ethnic minority

communities, and people living with disabilities are least likely to own a car.<sup>4</sup>

Air pollution, which is primarily from transport, is responsible for the early deaths of 2,500 people in Scotland each year.<sup>5</sup> It causes heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory problems<sup>6</sup>, with children and the elderly amongst the worst affected. Seven sites in Scotland are still exceeding air quality legal limits, nearly ten years after the limits were formally introduced.<sup>7 8</sup>

## Progress to date

It's clear that Scotland needs a new transport system. The current car-centric system is destroying our climate and our health. It is also leaving Scotland uncompetitive, as other countries transition away from internal

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2017/pages/5/>

<sup>2</sup> As above. P.85

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/44207/sct01193326941.pdf> p.221

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/44207/sct01193326941.pdf> p.53

<sup>5</sup> <https://foe.scot/press-release/new-research-means-2500-deaths-a-year-in-scotland-are-from-air-pollution/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/airpollution/ambient/health-impacts/en/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://foe.scot/scotlands-most-polluted-streets-in-2018/>

<sup>8</sup> Page 30/44.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008L0050&qid=1455033222658&from=EN>

combustion traffic, and move towards cleaner streets and healthier travel.

Rome is banning diesel cars from 2024<sup>9</sup>. Athens and Paris will remove diesel cars and vans from their cities by 2025<sup>10</sup>. Meanwhile, a huge coalition of cities around the world have pledged to introduce electric-only bus fleets by 2025, and remove fossil fuel vehicles by 2030.<sup>11</sup> Many of these cities compete directly with Scotland's cities for tourism and investment.

On a national level, several countries have announced plans to prevent the sale of fossil fuel vehicles beyond 2030, including Ireland, Germany, and, most recently, Denmark<sup>12</sup>.

In May 2019 the UK Committee on Climate Change advised a 2030 end date for fossil fuel cars and vans<sup>13</sup> across the UK. The Scottish Government's current commitment - "to phase out the need for fossil fuel vehicles by 2032" - was a welcome step but it is somewhat unclear and the target is not yet in law.

Equally, it is not enough to just plan for a like-for-like replacement of fossil fuel vehicles with electric alternatives. If all of Scotland's 3 million cars were turned electric overnight, we would still experience dangerous levels of sedentary behaviour, community severance due to traffic, and air pollution is still produced from electric cars by tyres and brakes. Instead, we need to look at how we can better incentivise alternative sustainable travel options.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://electrek.co/2018/02/28/rome-bans-diesel-cars-2024/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/dec/02/four-of-worlds-biggest-cities-to-ban-diesel-cars-from-their-centres>

<sup>11</sup> <https://climateprotection.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Survey-on-Global-Activities-to-Phase-Out-ICE-Vehicles-FINAL-Oct-3-2018.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-48668791>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-The-UKs-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming.pdf> p.35

## Low Emission Zones

The Scottish Government's proposed Low Emission Zones in 4 cities was a welcome step towards cleaning up Scotland's transport system. However, the proposed design of the zones is insufficient in tackling our transport problems.

Scotland's LEZs are set to have 'grace periods' of up to 6 years, meaning 6 more years of avoidable pollution. If these periods are used, LEZs will only affect petrol cars over 22 years old and diesel cars over 11 years old. When we're stopping some polluting cars entering city centres, many cities globally will have banned fossil fuel vehicles entirely.

There is also a risk that the broad powers for local authorities to suspend LEZs or set exemptions, with little scrutiny, will weaken the potential impact of the zones.

At the very least, to properly tackle air pollution we need to see LEZ 'grace periods' shortened and exemptions and suspensions used only where they are absolutely necessary.

These Zones do, though, give us the infrastructure and legislative basis for creating fossil-free zones. After a given date, such as 1st January 2030, these zones should restrict all fossil fuel private cars.

## Publicly owned buses

Public transport will play a key role in delivering more sustainable transport, and addressing the inequalities in our current transport system.

Public ownership of buses in the UK has been proven to deliver a high standard of public transport, with profits being reinvested into improving services and cleaning up our bus fleet. The Transport (Scotland) Bill looks set to give more councils the power to run their own services, and a number of

councils are investigating the feasibility of buying bus companies in their area.

However, legislation on its own will not deliver change, and start up costs are a barrier to creating a wider publicly owned bus network. We need to see new financing options developed to support councils who want to bring buses into public ownership.

The Scottish Government already spends upwards of £300 million per year on subsidising private bus companies through the concessionary travel fund, the Green Bus Fund, and the BEAR retrofit programme. Therefore, financial assistance to help councils launch their own bus services will not only unlock the benefits of publicly owned transport - but also ensure that future subsidies benefit councils, where they'd previously only benefited private companies.

### **A cleaner bus fleet**

Regardless of ownership model, the Scottish Government needs to take a tough line with all bus companies in regard to air quality - particularly those who refuse the funding available to make buses cleaner, as was the case with the recent BEAR 2 fund<sup>14</sup>.

Going forward, there needs to be stronger conditions for these funds, with Government using all available powers to ensure a greater uptake of retrofit funding and broader air quality initiatives. This should include measures upto and including stopping bus companies who refuse retrofit funding, or are unwilling to clean up their fleet, from being awarded any other subsidy or granted licenses to run on new routes.

### **Active travel**

In 2018 the Scottish Government doubled the active travel budget to £80million - a significant

commitment, but one we need to build on further. In May 2019, the Scottish Government accepted it would miss its target of 10% of commuter journeys being made by bike.<sup>15</sup> In the most recent statistics, only 2.6% of people cycled to work.<sup>16</sup>

We need to continue to increase investment in active travel, making walking and cycling safe, easy, and accessible for more people.

### **A vision for the future of transport**

To tackle the dual issues of climate change and air pollution, we need to see a step change in our approach to transport. The era of large scale private car ownership must come to an end. To deliver the transport system we need, politicians must:

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<https://foe.scot/press-release/government-funding-air-pollution-ignored-bus-companies/>

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<https://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/10-per-cent-cycling-target-unlikely-to-be-met-ministers-concede-1-4949530>

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<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41863/scottish-transport-statistics-2017-with-correction-to-table-214.pdf> p.17