

Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee call for views – Climate Change Plan (update)

Cycling Scotland submission January 2021

Question 1 – What is your assessment of the progress to date in cutting emissions within the sector/sectors of interest and the implementation of proposals and policies set out in previous Climate Change Plans (RPP1-3)?

As acknowledged in the updated plan, transport is the single largest emitting sector in Scotland, accounting for 35.6% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018. Of these, 40% are from cars¹, with vans (Light Goods Vehicles) increasing to account for 13% of emissions². The 93% increase in LGV emissions between 1990 and 2018, the largest percentage increase of all transport modes, is of great concern. This highlights that much remains to be done to cut emissions in the transport sector.

With regards to progress on the implementation of proposals and policies set out in previous Climate Change Plans, it is clear more radical action is needed to reduce vehicle emissions in Scotland in the next few years, rather than the next few decades. It is welcome that the updated plan, as well as previous versions of the plan, sets out that active travel modes (and public transport) should be prioritised, and private car use deprioritised, particularly for short journeys, and for the sustainable travel and investment hierarchies to form the basis of policy decision-making. Cycling is a viable and cost-effective way to reduce emissions, as a zero-carbon option, to help move Scotland towards a carbon-neutral economy, and we would like to see greater emphasis on active travel going forward to achieve the required reduction in transport emissions.

Question 2 – Do you think the scale of reductions proposed within the sector(s) are appropriate and are the proposals and policies within CCPu effective for meeting the annual emissions targets and contributing towards the 75% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 and net-zero by 2045 targets?

Any targets/proposed reductions should be accompanied by policies and initiatives that will help achieve the targets such as the promotion of cycling and active travel, and behaviour change to facilitate modal shift. We welcome the range of policies outlined in the transport chapter, such as increased investment in active travel infrastructure, introduction of a workplace parking levy, enhanced provision of child and adult cycle training, and the proposal to introduce 20-minute neighbourhoods. Such action is essential to help increase levels of cycling and active travel, and to achieve significant emissions reduction from transport.

With regards to the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles, which has been brought forward to 2030, which is welcome, we note reference in this section to low emission and electric vehicles. Whilst such vehicles have a role to play in helping to decarbonise transport, it should not be relied upon too heavily to achieve desired policy outcomes, as the pace of

¹ Scottish Government (2020) Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032 Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero

² Scottish Government: Carbon Account for Transport No. 12: 2020 Edition

change and rate of uptake cannot be guaranteed. Such vehicles still represent vehicular traffic on the roads and issues of congestion and emissions, from very harmful particulate matter emissions from braking and tyre wear³, remain. The biggest barrier to cycling is concern about traffic on the road, and so a large number of these vehicles, in place of conventional petrol or diesel vehicles, on the road may discourage people from cycling, which could undermine the achievement of emission reduction targets and broader climate change objectives. Further, there are additional safety concerns for vulnerable road users, like people cycling, as these vehicles are often silent/much quieter at low speeds and so are more challenging for people cycling to hear on the road. The focus should be on promoting delivery of the sustainable travel hierarchy, implementing it into budget decisions and prioritising active travel (and other sustainable modes).

We note the updated plan contains a new commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030 which we welcome. This commitment needs to be supported by deliverable, yet ambitious, policies and sustained long-term funding, to achieve required levels of modal shift to active and sustainable modes. Such policies include delivery of networks of dedicated separated cycling and active travel infrastructure, access to bikes, cycle training for all population groups, access to secure bike storage and behaviour change initiatives. Alongside measures to encourage modal shift to active and sustainable modes, measures to reduce demand for cars and decisions on the allocation of investment in the transport system need to be taken to deliver on this commitment. As 2030 is now less than 10 years away, the proposed scale of reduction seems appropriate and achievable within the timescale. Going forward, this should be revised and made more ambitious to align with other targets. We look forward to the Scottish Government's roadmap in 2021 for how the 20% reduction will be achieved.

We welcome the commitment in the updated plan to additional £50 million Active Freeways funding, as recognition of the critical need for high quality active travel infrastructure on arterial routes to urban centres and on major routes. It would be useful to clarify how and where this funding will be allocated, and over how many years the funding is allocated for.

We welcome the proposal on the provision and promotion of e-bikes to households to help meet their everyday travel needs. E-bikes have an important role in encouraging modal shift, as they enable longer distances to be travelled more easily by bike. We would like to see this commitment to e-bikes extended further to include e-cargo bikes, both for individual household and commercial use.

Question 3 – Do you think the timescales over which the proposals and policies are expected to take effect are appropriate?

Most of the proposals and policies outlined in the transport chapter are due to be implemented over the next five to ten years. As the first set of emission reduction targets are due to be achieved by 2030 (a 75% reduction in emissions), we would suggest that this timescale for implementation should be accelerated, given transport's ongoing substantial contribution to emissions. Although it can be difficult to predict how long is required for policies to take effect, the sooner action is taken, the sooner benefits are likely to be experienced. Fundamentally, the emission reduction targets to 2030 will not be met unless there is a modal shift away from single occupancy vehicles. We have previously highlighted

³ Lelieveld, J, K. Klingmuller, A. Pozzer, U. Poschl, M. Fnais, A. Daiber, and T. Munzel (2019) 'Cardiovascular disease burden from ambient air pollution in Europe reassessed using novel hazard ratio functions' European Heart Journal 0:1-7 <https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/advance-article/doi/10.1093/eurheartj/ehz135/5372326>

in the National Transport Strategy that there should be a trajectory to end new trunk road construction as expanding road capacity will inevitably increase traffic levels and increased emissions as a result.⁴ If emissions from traffic are not tackled in the next 5 years, it will continue to undermine progress made in other sectors.

Question 4 – To what extent do you think the proposals and policies reflect considerations about behaviour change and opportunities to secure wider benefits (e.g., environmental, financial, and health) from specific interventions in particular sectors?

We consider that greater emphasis needs to be placed on achieving the required scale of behaviour change and it should be acknowledged that this will not happen overnight. It is imperative that work is redoubled to influence behaviour as we emerge from the pandemic and that a trajectory of targets is set out to demonstrate progress. Only by adopting this approach will it be possible to influence people’s travel choices effectively and make a significant contribution to reducing emissions from transport.

We note the updated plan details the introduction of a public engagement strategy on climate change, which is currently out for consultation. This is welcome if it helps to improve understanding of behavioural motivations and help to influence behaviour change outcomes as a result.

The updated plan references the UK Committee on Climate Change recommendation on the need to embed positive behaviours in relation to emissions reductions and climate change⁵. The current Covid-19 pandemic has led to fundamental changes in travel patterns and behaviours. The importance of sustainable travel and the possibilities around reducing travel have been highlighted. One of the positive outcomes of the pandemic has been an increase in rates of cycling (and walking) across the country. Compared to 2019, rates of cycling from March to December 2020 were much higher and increased by more than 100% in some areas⁶. Going forward, action is needed to embed this (behaviour) change long-term to achieve a sustained modal shift to active travel and the resultant reduction in transport emissions, from increased rates of cycling and walking.

Question 5 – To what extent do you think the CCPu delivers a green recovery?

We welcome the range of policies outlined in the CCPu including supporting active travel and public transport, access to bikes, cycling training for adults and children, workplace parking levies, and the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods, which all contribute to delivering a green recovery.

Ensuring a green recovery after Covid-19 is a key commitment of the Scottish Government⁷, and budgetary decisions need to support this. Decisions which support the delivery of the sustainable transport and investment hierarchies are required in this regard. It is essential that it is also a socially just recovery as part of a Just Transition to net zero and the provision of greater access to bikes is a key element in a just transition.

⁴ <https://www.cycling.scot/mediaLibrary/other/english/7079.pdf>

⁵ UK Committee on Climate Change (2020) Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-uk-emissions-2020-progress-report-to-parliament/>, page 14

⁶ <https://www.cycling.scot/news-article/six-month-stats-see-cycling-up-43-in-scotland>

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/green-recovery-low-carbon-energy-project-capital-funding-form-and-guidance-2/>

There was a significant reduction in car journeys during the first lockdown period in 2020, which led to improvements in air quality and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Positively, there was a significant increase in the number of people cycling in 2020; however, there has also been a massive decrease in the number of people using public transport, which has an important role to play in decarbonising transport and delivering the sustainable transport hierarchy. As we move forward in the transition out of lockdown, it is important that the gains in improved air quality, emissions reductions, and increased levels of cycling are not being reversed by a return to pre-pandemic or even higher levels of motorised transport.

We welcome the support given to local authorities to introduce temporary cycling and walking infrastructure to support people to travel actively for essential journeys during the lockdown. Evidence from a recent survey we carried out highlights the importance of dedicated segregated infrastructure to encourage cycling, with more than a quarter of survey respondents stating that dedicated cycle paths would be the most likely factor to encourage them to cycle after the first lockdown⁸. In this regard, in response to the current pandemic, there is a need to ensure that transport infrastructure decision-making and spending takes into account the need to deliver space separated for different users, especially in busier urban areas with cycle lanes physically separated from footways and the carriageway. Space allocation decisions and ensuring sufficient footway and cycle path width will help physical distancing for active travel and public transport, both now and in response to future pandemics.

Such action is essential to ensure a green recovery. Cycling and active travel has a key role in achieving an effective green recovery and transition to net-zero emissions, make a significant contribution to a reduction in transport emissions, and can help to address the overwhelming challenges of the climate emergency.

⁸ <https://www.cycling.scot/news-article/new-lockdown-cycling-survey>