

Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable
Growth
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Ms Long,

Thank you for your letter of 25 November, copied to Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Deputy First Minister, Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Housing and Transport, Stewart Stevenson MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth games and Sport, regarding your concerns and those of your membership organisations on the Draft Scottish Budget and the amount being allocated to Sustainable and Active Travel. I am responding on behalf of my Ministerial colleagues.

Firstly, I note your concerns regarding the Draft Budget and can I reassure you that this Scottish Government is still committed to promoting sustainable and active travel and to achieving Scotland's 10% vision for cycling by 2020. However, the 36% capital budget cut imposed by Westminster has meant that difficult choices have had to be taken as a consequence. Nonetheless, we will continue to support the sustainable and active travel agenda by promoting and encouraging active and public transport alternatives to the private car. We will also continue to work closely with stakeholders such as Sustrans, Cycling Scotland and all local authorities, and fund further initiatives as and when affordable. Whilst allocations from the new Future Transport Fund are still to be determined, active travel will of course be one of the themes under consideration for support from this Fund.

We also remain committed to delivering our Manifesto commitments which given current budget constraints means some commitments will necessarily be delivered in the longer term. Delivering on our cycling aspirations will also take time – particularly around behaviour change, as well as the supporting infrastructure required, such as off-road shared use paths for cycling and walking. One of our key priorities now is to create the conditions for change, and in Scotland at the current time that means a focus on sustainable economic growth.

New investment in wider transport infrastructure, appropriately targeted, is necessary to support our national economy, and much of this will contribute to sustainable transport,

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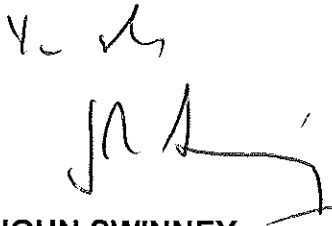
through supporting modal shifts to rail and bus, as well as easing pollution-generating congestion through improvements to the trunk road network. This will in due course help take traffic off local roads and improve conditions for cycling. For example, the Trunk Road Cycling Initiative maintains its requirement for cyclists to be given special consideration in all new trunk road schemes and within improvements, and will be subject to cycle audits in accordance with Cycling by Design. The most recent examples of cycle facilities being included in a new trunk road project is the A96 Fochabers and Mosstodloch By-pass, which includes the provision of 4 non-motorised user underpasses and 3km of shared use cycleways.

Since 2007, the Scottish Government has invested over £83 million in cycling infrastructure and the wider promotion of cycling - a significant amount. During this time, we have worked very closely with a range of stakeholders to ensure, where cycling is a priority in that area, that facilities, promotion and training are delivered. More recently, the Minister for Housing and Transport announced a comprehensive funding package of £2.2 million for Bikeability Scotland training, a "Give me Cycle Space" campaign to raise awareness amongst drivers of child cyclists, a Cycle Friendly and Sustainable Communities Fund to develop and promote local community-led projects, and to share the lessons learned from the 7 *Smarter Choices Smarter Places* communities with other communities. All of these projects provide a platform for behaviour change across Scotland and point people towards the most sustainable travel options.

Partnership working with local authorities to offer active travel alternatives is crucial especially in the larger urban areas. In September, a newly constructed Copenhagen style segregated cycle path was opened in the East End of Glasgow as part of the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme. When fully completed, this path will link to the Connect2 path in the West End and will provide a safe and segregated cycle path for those who wish to cycle to the Commonwealth Stadium, the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome and the National Indoor Sports Arena. This partnership project will provide a lasting legacy following 2014, for local residents, commuters and tourists.

Finally, on 8 December, I announced the continuation of the Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets grant allocated to local authorities as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement which provides additional funding for active travel, some £6.069m in 2012-13. This funding can be used to complement the projects being delivered by Sustrans and Cycling Scotland. This budget represents a 19% capital reduction across all local authorities, a smaller reduction than the Westminster imposed figure of 36%, due to Scottish Government intervention in acting to support locally delivered initiatives.

I hope this reassures you that we remain very much committed to promoting the health benefits from making everyday journeys by foot or by bike and are taking action to make Scotland a healthier, fitter and more active nation.


JOHN SWINNEY