



PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Infrastructure debate

Scottish Government debate, 14:00 on Tuesday 24 February 2015

Key points

- **We need investment in the Scottish inter-city rail network north of the Central Belt.** The Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) needs to set out investment plans to tackle the uncompetitive railway journey times between our cities north of the Central Belt. The current version of the IIP sets out no rail investment proposals north of the Central Belt yet provides £6 billion for further speeding up road journeys.
- **The IIP must also set out investment to deliver the NPF3 National Developments on Active Travel.** The Third National Planning Framework (NPF3), as published in June 2014, sets out National Developments for a (i) Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network, and (ii) the Central Scotland Green Network. We need to see these NPF3 National Developments matched with funding in the IIP.

1. Need for investment in the Scottish inter-city rail network

- 1.1. Scotland's rail network north of the Central Belt is in dire need of investment.
- 1.2. In 2008 then First Minister Alex Salmond sensibly said that "railways must at least compete with roads". But while there are a number of major initiatives to improve the railway's competitive position in the Central Belt, no similar ambition is being shown for routes to the north of Scotland.
- 1.3. It is frankly embarrassing that some of our inter-city rail routes are slower than they were over a century ago. In 1895, it was possible to travel by steam train from Perth to Edinburgh in 65 minutes, but today the fastest journey takes 71 minutes. In 1895, one could get from Dundee to Edinburgh in 57 minutes but nowadays the fastest rail trip is 64 minutes.
- 1.4. Last year, the current transport minister, Derek Mackay, while he was planning minister, made a clear commitment for improving the speed of Scottish inter-city rail travel. The third National Planning Framework (NPF3), published in June 2014, clearly states: "*We want to make rail travel between cities quicker by car, and to complete the electrification of the railway lines between the cities.*"¹
- 1.5. It is imperative that the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) sets out a clear series of investments to bring Scotland's inter-city rail network up to speed. We set this out in our new 'Inter-City Express' brochure published this week:²
 - Inverness to Perth: double and electrify
 - Aberdeen to the Central Belt: upgrade and electrify
 - Aberdeen to Inverness: hourly service, under two hours
 - Perth-Edinburgh Direct: 45 minutes, centre to centre
 - Perth: a new inter-city rail hub.

2. NPF3 National Developments on Active Travel need to be funded in the IIP

- 2.1. We were pleased to see the retention of the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) in NPF3, as published in June 2014, as a National Development. We were further pleased to see the addition of a network of long-distance cycling and walking paths as a new 'Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network' National

Development. NPF3 highlights the need to close key gaps in the active travel network. However, there remains a disconnect between these welcome planning priorities and the Government's investment priorities as set out in the IIP. For this sustainable walking and cycling network to become a reality, we will need to see the Government bring forward a revised IIP which sets out the level of funding required to bring the active travel network into fruition.

- 2.2. While the Government's planning ambitions for improving the national walking and cycling network are welcome, it will also be imperative to monitor the degree to which local authorities are prepared to assist in the development of the network. The nature of active travel development requires the active participation of local government but the great unknown is the willingness of local authorities to participate. While local government transport budgets remain stretched, it is clear that investment in strategic long-distance active travel networks will have to be financially supported by the Scottish Government just as it invests in the strategic road and rail networks.
- 2.3. Most fundamentally, the Government will need to make a long-term commitment to increasing the share of the transport budget that goes into active travel if its ambitions for growing these most sustainable forms of transport are to be met.
- 2.4. We would note that the UK Government has earlier this year agreed to amend its Infrastructure Bill to include a 'Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy'. This move was welcomed by our London-based sister organisation, the Campaign for Better Transport.³ The Scottish Government must set out appropriate investment plans for active travel if it is not to fall behind the commitments being made by the UK Government.

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¹ See section 5.17 of <<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00453683.pdf>>.

² The new 'Inter-City Express' brochure is available at <<http://transformscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Inter-City-Express-brochure.pdf>>. Further information on the 'Inter-City Express' campaign is available on its website at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/intercityexpress>>.

³ See <<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/cycling-and-walking-coalition-welcomes-governments-bold-leadership-investment>>.