

TRANSPORT AND THE CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN

Members' Policy Briefing

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Transport and the Climate Change Plan: Improved targets welcome, but Plan leaves much to be desired for sustainable transport

While Scotland was engulfed in snowy weather last month, the Scottish Government revealed its latest plan to hold back long-term changes to the climate. The Climate Change Plan sets how the Government aims to reduce emissions out to 2032. The first draft was published over a year ago and was scrutinised by four Parliamentary committees, all of whom urged the Scottish Government to bring forward a final Plan which was more credible, ambitious and detailed. Yet in many ways, this Plan is less ambitious than the draft and contains less detail on how policies will actually reduce emissions.

There has been a welcome step forward on transport, our biggest emitting sector, where ambition has jumped from 32% to 37% emissions reduction over the period, a significant change versus the first draft. This effectively embeds the Scottish Government's Programme for Government commitments to phase out the sale of new fossil fuel vehicles by 2032, introduce Low Emissions Zones, double funding for cycling and walking, and disburse a new £60m innovation fund, some of which will be targeted at transport innovation. Together, these add up to an additional half a million tonnes of CO2 savings by 2032, and hopefully significantly more beyond that as the shift to clean vehicles gathers pace.

More information on how the phase out will be delivered would be welcome in the coming months. The final plan has definitely given much more weight to public procurement of clean vehicles and preferential parking access for ULEVs and hints at changes to building regulations to incorporate more 'at home' charging from day one. But we still don't know what the full balance of financial and non-financial incentives will be to help people kick the petrol and diesel habit.

More importantly for wider wellbeing benefits, the plan doesn't reveal much about how to help people out of their cars in the first place, helping to reduce congestion and improve health alongside emissions. The plan remains technology heavy and light on behaviour change. Much more work on managing demand for road travel and encouraging modal shift is still needed.

The Scottish Government faced heavy criticism from stakeholders and Parliament on its draft plan last year for its assumed 27% increase in vehicle kilometres by 2032, bucking recent trends. Unfortunately, that assumption remains in the final plan, resting on future population and economic growth. While many of the policies in the plan may help to shape behaviours and change norms, there's a huge risk that the forecast becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy if it is used to shape future transport and land use planning. If you build it, the saying goes, they will come. This is particularly pertinent when recent figures reveal falling bus passenger numbers. We need to support a much greater shift to public transport, alongside active travel.

Aside from transport and industry, the Plan rolls back ambition in almost every area of the economy, from homes to farming and from electricity to waste. In our cold homes, planned emissions reductions of 75% have been scaled back to just 23% and in electricity, the final plan emits 3 million more tonnes of CO2 in 2032 than the draft. It's fair to say that in some areas, the draft was overly ambitious, stretching credibility without the

detail on how savings would be delivered. Unfortunately, the Government has taken that critique to heart and the pendulum has swung too hard the other way.

But this Plan is about more than just the numbers. The Climate Change Plan is supposed to be our blueprint for the kind of Scotland we want to be in a little over a decade's time. It should be the place where our famed Scottish innovation is mixed with our needs for cleaner air, cosier homes and a safe, healthy environment. Yet the plan ignores some easy wins and sidesteps tougher challenges where innovation is sorely needed along the way, particularly in agriculture and heat.

There's a chance for all parties in the Scottish Parliament to work together to agree common ambitions and actions with the upcoming Climate Bill due soon. It must address the huge untapped potential for new policies that will deliver multiple benefits for the economy, public health and our environment. The urgency of climate change and our global commitments under the Paris Agreement require the Scottish Government to set strong new targets in this Bill, including increased action before 2030 which will put us on a path to eliminate our contribution to climate change by 2050.

Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).