

DRAFT BUDGET 2014-15

SUBMISSION FROM SUSTRANS

Introduction

Sustrans welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Economy, Energy and Tourism (EET) Committee's call for evidence on the draft budget 2014-15. Sustrans is a leading UK charity that enables people to travel by foot, bicycle or public transport for more of the journeys we make everyday. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

In this written evidence, we focus specifically two of the EET Committee's core areas of interest: "overarching target for the transition to a low carbon economy" and "develop a coherent approach to assisting our cities and city regions in being the engines of growth for the Scottish economy". We focus in particular on the transport elements of both of these areas.

How has the Scottish Government's budget over the years 2012-13 and 2013-14 supported these core areas of interest?

Sustrans considers that the 2012-13 and 2013-14 budgets have not sufficiently supported work to increase levels of active and sustainable travel. Given the many benefits that derive from increased investment in these areas, we consider that they should receive substantially more funding. We consider that at present a disproportionate amount of funding has been directed towards large infrastructure projects. If we look specifically at the Relevant National Indicators of interest to Sustrans, it is clear that more investment is needed in these areas:

Reduce traffic congestion: Scotland's main towns, cities and roads all experience varying levels of traffic congestion problems, especially during the morning and evening rush hours, even though the Scottish Government has been pursuing a comprehensive programme of road building. Therefore, it is clear that alternative modes of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport need to be made more appealing to people in order to encourage people out of their cars and consequently reduce congestion.

Reduce Scotland's carbon footprint: It is clear that work in this area has been insufficient to date given that Scotland has missed its climate change annual targets for two consecutive years. Increasing the number of people travelling actively or on public transport would significantly help to reduce emissions from the transport sector. This is particularly pertinent given that the transport sector is the second largest for greenhouse gases in Scotland.

Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport: Figures have remained fairly static in recent years therefore pointing to the need for more action to be taken.

Is the NPF an effective method of measuring performance and are sufficient resources being allocated to track progress against the targets and indicators?

In theory, the NPF is an effective method of measuring performance; setting desired outcomes is a sensible way of focusing activity. However, it is important that targets, outcomes and indicators are clearly used in practice to guide investment decisions.

What alternative spend would you propose to better support each core area of interest and from what area should such resources be diverted?

Sustrans considers that more resources should be directed towards helping develop, maintain and promote cycling and walking routes in Scotland. In addition, we consider that additional funds should be directed towards improving public transport infrastructure. In order to achieve both of these objectives, funding should be redirected from large scale infrastructure projects, such as road schemes. Redirecting funding in this way would bring many benefits. For example, it would allow more people to commute to work in a sustainable fashion, thereby reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions, decreasing congestion and delays on our roads, while also delivering health benefits to individuals as well as saving them money. This would significantly help to deliver three National Indicators: “reduce traffic congestion”, “reduce Scotland’s carbon footprint” and “increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport”.

About Sustrans

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We’re a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

It’s time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk