

PROFESSOR IAIN DOCHERTY

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

In overall terms, transport remains relatively generously resourced given the overall funding envelope available to the Scottish Government. This is to be welcomed given the economic, environmental and social benefits that investment in appropriate transport infrastructure and services brings for Scotland. For many years, myself and several academic colleagues have called for consistency in transport project delivery whereby a coherent strategy of infrastructure investment for the medium term is decided upon and then delivered effectively and efficiently. The Scottish Government is to be congratulated on its track record in this regard, which is excellent and most certainly the envy of many people in the rest of the UK outside London. The draft budget reflects a welcome consistency in transport project delivery in Scotland with focus on a number of well-known and appraised major schemes. I am *broadly* in favour of the current portfolio of major infrastructure investments but whatever views I might have about the relative priority or desirability of certain schemes the overall package is sensible and I would not seek to unpick it;

For some time I have commented that the Scottish transport network has seen consistent historic capital underinvestment. This has been addressed in recent years by the Scottish Government as far as possible given the resources available. However, I know that there are widespread concerns about the balance between investment in 'new' or upgraded infrastructure and maintenance of existing networks particularly the trunk road network. The draft budget shows a very modest increase in the funding available for the maintenance of the current road network in the next financial year. An important line of inquiry for the Committee may be to ascertain the extent to which this level of funding actually maintains and/or enhances the condition and asset value of the road network appropriately. Given the available data I cannot comment authoritatively on the underlying reasons for the large increase in the roads depreciation line but this is worrying at face value;

My most significant concern by far is the continuing very low level of investment in active and sustainable travel which in fact appears to decrease this year. A figure of £25million out of a total budget for transport in the order of £2billion neither demonstrates sufficient commitment nor will make a significant difference in reality to the extent to which walking and cycling really become more important in the overall transport mix in Scotland. We know from academic research that increased levels of walking and cycling bring real and important improvements not just in transport outcomes such as congestion relief, local air quality improvement etc, but also perhaps more importantly in public health, wellbeing and social inclusion. I have said to the Committee in evidence before that I regard the remarkable and consistent lack of investment in the pedestrian environment and wider public realm of our towns and cities as a national disgrace, and I continue to believe this and be highly disappointed by the lack of commitment to redressing the situation.

Improving the physical environment for people to walk more would be the single most important intervention that the transport budget could make to improve performance measured against the National Performance Outcomes. I would urge the Committee to refer to the work of my good friend and colleague Professor Phil Goodwin of University College London on the very high returns available from targeted smaller investment schemes such as those for improved walking and cycling facilities.

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