

## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

### WRITTEN SUBMISSION

#### **The impact policy intervention and budgetary provision has made to National indicators.**

##### **Housing**

**The Scottish Government should continue to provide grant funded assistance to councils for the provision of insulation measures in both Council and Private Houses** as an important means of achieving the Carbon Reduction targets.

**The Scottish Government should consider providing additional grant funded assistance to Councils for the provision of affordable houses for rent.** This will both assist in reducing the number of households living in inadequate and unaffordable rented properties but also in improving the economy of the Building Industry.

##### **Transport**

**Any increased investment in existing schemes for example Electric Vehicle initiatives, Air Quality Fund, Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets and Active travel in schools would be welcomed** as it would obviously contribute positively to the wider climate change and traffic reduction targets.

Notwithstanding the above, while the need to have in place good quality charging infrastructure to encourage the take up of electric vehicles is recognised, once core infrastructure is in place, there will be a need to review the case for continued investment relative to the public take up of electric vehicles

One key area to be considered is whether a **greater effort is needed to co-ordinate the electric vehicle infrastructure investment across Scotland.** One single procurement framework and equipment specification would be very useful as opposed to different approaches across various authorities.

**The method chosen to distribute funding for relevant initiatives or projects, whether it be bidding to the Scottish Government or to other bodies such as Sustrans should be considered.** Too often the bid / award process becomes the focus and takes up an inordinate amount of time as opposed to the actual project itself. Perhaps a more efficient way would be to fund Council's directly or through the Regional Transport Partnerships. This could be on a proportionate basis e.g. based upon population, length of road network etc. and would allow bodies, such as Sustrans, to focus their attention on bringing their knowledge and experience to the projects instead of being caught up in the procedural aspects.

**On the traffic reduction statistics specifically, we would ask whether the sample size is sufficient and what actually constitutes congestion to the respondents.** Someone's experience of congestion in a rural area is significantly different to someone living / working on the outskirts of a city, for example someone travelling from Hamilton to Glasgow experiencing congestion within Glasgow would be represented in the results as being an issue in South Lanarkshire given their home address.

Whilst there has been investment in recent years on trunk roads it is also important to recognise to date there are no specific funding streams available to target local congestion hotspots and this largely falls to individual Local Authorities or Regional Transport Authorities to prioritise funds. The origin and destination of someone's daily trip will inevitably include a journey along a local non trunk road, therefore **there should be a dedicated funding stream for such local congestion improvements.** Within South Lanarkshire the recently announced Clyde Valley Infrastructure Initiative (City Deal) will seek to tackle known congestion hotspots, but this is only within the Glasgow conurbation. It does not cover the rural side of South Lanarkshire or elsewhere in Scotland.

We would ask whether the investment in public or active travel is indeed making any real difference, although we recognise that current monitoring regimes, e.g. for cycling may not be capturing what is actually occurring on the ground. The static figures may suggest that further policy controls are needed such as greater regulation across the bus and rail industry, increased cycle monitoring and / or enhanced travel demand management measures. **All of the elements which influence travel choice (geography, travel patterns, deprivation) need to be considered when allocating future investment.**

### **Broadband**

**The Investment into rural high speed broadband and letting of the implementation contract is welcome as is the increase in funding of £6m within the 2014/15 financial year.**

From our understanding the implementation will take place over 4.5 years ending in December 2017 and will be delivered in 15 phases. Fibre-based broadband is expected to reach 95% of premises across Scotland and 85% by the end of 2015. It will be important to **ensure that gaps and anomalies in coverage within both urban and rural areas are addressed.** Anomalies such as properties being "too close" to an exchange, a housing development or an industrial estate not being initially economic to upgrade to high speed broadband, require to be prioritised within the implementation contract.

Individual local authorities will have varying degrees of coverage and some rural areas will remain out with the coverage of high speed broadband even by 2017. We have noted that an additional £20.99m has been allocated to Scotland through BDUK and it is important that this supports all local authority areas where gaps would remain.

The investment in physical infrastructure is welcome however the Council and local partners **recognise a significant issue with regard to individuals accessing the internet due to cost and/or skills barriers, particularly the most vulnerable**. This issue is of increased importance with the move to a digital by default benefit system for Universal Credit where accessibility by claimants is essential and to online job applications and job search websites, including the DWPs Universal Job Match

### **Water and Sewerage Infrastructure**

**The Council's links to water and sewerage infrastructure relate solely to the recovery of Water Charges via Council Tax. There does not appear to be anything in this document which changes this arrangement.**

### **Investment levels required to meet the Scottish Government's climate change targets**

Budget decisions made by the Scottish Government will obviously have an influence on greenhouse gas emissions but other factors need to be considered for example more ambitious energy efficiency standards for new buildings and the improvement of Scotland's social housing stock as well as planning policies which encourage well located and sustainably designed development.

In its previous report on the matter, the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee recommended that:

***'The Committee seeks the views of the Scottish Government on whether modelling the forecast effects on both emissions and carbon consumption would be useful in monitoring progress against the Sustainability Target and Carbon Footprint Indicator (Recommendation 16)'***.

The policy route map for delivering greenhouse gas emissions reductions is 'Low Carbon Scotland' The document sets out the changes that will be necessary across all sectors of the economy for Scotland to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets that have been enshrined in the Act and is the key top level plan by which spending proposals can be assessed. **The Committee should consider not just whether spending proposals are consistent with Low Carbon Scotland's general intentions but also whether any key areas for carbon reduction contained in the document are not being adequately reflected in spending plans.** Not all plans can be brought forward at the same time and any spending plan has to take a balanced view of all the competing demands faced. However, over successive budgets, it should become clear whether or not Low Carbon Scotland proposals that are heavily dependent on investment and spend are being properly addressed.

The impact on emissions of specific spending proposals assumes some form of carbon impact assessment. **Carbon impacts will be hard to quantify but the assessment should at least try to determine whether net impacts of**

**spending proposals are likely to be positive or negative** in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reduction and to give some indication of the size and persistence over the longer term of the impact.

**Prediction of the relative impact of different proposals on Scotland's future greenhouse gas emissions is also likely to be difficult but not totally impossible and would be especially important where a direct impact is intended.** For example by setting a carbon reduction target in relation to a spending proposal to improve energy efficiency measures in social housing, the success (or otherwise) of the proposal could be assessed. It would be necessary for the funding mechanism to be designed in such a way that impacts are measured, reported and assessed by those responsible for their implementation. This in turn would help develop evidence for a more targeted approach to spending proposals through a cost benefit analysis. It makes sense to target spending on measures which lead to more carbon reduction per pound spent.

**The Scottish Government should consider the local dimension and the role in which local authorities can play.** Competitive funding schemes divert considerable effort and in many cases targeted allocations on a targeted basis would be far more effective and give officers at a local level the certainty of funding needed to bring in additional funding to build even bigger and better projects.

**Finally, there is a need for high level technical support to support the development of low carbon energy systems and heat networks.** There is no obvious private sector market capable of advancing these proposals as things stand due the high level of risk, investment and partnership required at a local level. Inevitably it must fall to local/national government to take a lead. The Scottish Government's Heat Map project has been useful in highlighting locations where heat networks are likely to be viable. While some local authorities have been able to develop local heat networks (notably Fife, Aberdeen and Glasgow) however, other authorities will lack the necessary technical and financial expertise to even consider this as an option. This could mean that great opportunities are being missed and that local capital investment is being directed to other solutions which would not offer the same benefits in terms of carbon reduction. It follows from this that major capital investment needs to be supported with high quality technical advice. It needs a grand plan to avoid being done in a piecemeal way.

**South Lanarkshire Council  
31 October 2014**