Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Inquiry into air quality in Scotland

Written submission from Path for All

Summary

- Support and fund local authorities to create Low Emission Zones
- 10% of the transport budget for walking and cycling
- 20mph the default speed limit in cities.
- Improve public transport.

Comments

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission. Our comments are limited to those aspects that have direct relevance to the work and objectives of Paths for All.

Air quality is a devolved matter so the Scottish Government is legally bound to ensure that EU law, as interpreted by the High Court, is complied with in Scotland.

The Cleaner Air for Scotland strategy aims for compliance with European law by 2020. The main commitment from the Scottish Government is to work with a local authority to introduce Scotland’s first Low Emission Zone by 2018. We support the intention to have Low Emission Zones within a wider strategy but consider that much more is needed than is currently proposed.

Action on air quality and transport can help meet outcomes on:

- Climate change – the transport sector contributes up to a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions
- Health and the economy – reducing days lost at work and costs to the NHS
- Making Scotland more active – increasing active travel (walking and cycling) and the benefits this brings

We support the strategy if it results in cleaner air and a resulting improvement of wellbeing – often for some of the most vulnerable people in society.

We support an emphasis on greater use of public transport, green infrastructure, walking and cycling in tackling air pollution. As well as being a part of the solution, walking and cycling become more pleasant and therefore more likely to be adopted as air quality improves – creating a “virtuous circle”.

Improving air quality can play a part in creating better quality walking and cycling environments throughout Scotland – and so will support delivery of the Scottish Government’s Active Scotland Outcomes Framework, National Walking Strategy, The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland and the Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland.
We would like to highlight the importance of walking and cycling – but particularly walking. The numbers of people walking as a travel mode are significant – particularly in combination with public transport - but this area often doesn’t get enough emphasis or funding. Inactive people are also more likely to start walking rather than cycling as an active travel option.

In response to the questions posed by the Committee:

- **Does Scotland have the right policies (Clean Air for Scotland Strategy), support and incentives in place to adequately tackle air pollution?**

The National Walking Strategy, and the Long-Term Vision for Active Travel suggest that some of the policy framework is correct. However, the Scottish Government should legislate to reduce the default speed limit in urban areas from 30mph to 20mph which would support active travel aspirations and reduce air pollution. To support public transport the Scottish Government should consider whether re-regulation of public transport would address the decline in bus usage.

Whilst the current policy and legislative framework is heading in the right direction, the interventions to dramatically change people’s travel behaviour have only partly succeeded. The level of support and incentives, married to leadership and funding, need to increase significantly to get the step change that Scotland needs to adequately tackle air pollution.

- **Are the policies sufficiently ambitious?**

No. The health, environmental and economic benefits of making active and sustainable travel the first travel choice for everyone in Scotland demand ambitious targets are set and pursued by the Scottish Government and local authorities. Relying on future changes to Planning systems, reviewing guidance, implementing frameworks, technological improvement etc. suggest that the matter is not being treated with the urgency it requires. As a minimum, the Scottish Government should set aside 10% of its transport budget for walking and cycling.

- **Are the policies and delivery mechanisms (support and incentives) being effectively implemented and successful in addressing the issues?**

The Smarter Choices Smarter Places Programme currently funded through Transport Scotland and local authorities as mentioned in 6.9 of the CAFS strategy is producing positive examples that have changed people’s personal travel behaviour and increased active and sustainable travel options. Building on the skills, energy and expertise of Third Sector Organisations is a proven way to deliver behaviour change by individuals and organisations. For example, using Paths for All to deliver initiatives has meant no profits being generated for shareholders, no money being allocated to a HQ outside Scotland, access to a Scottish wide network of experts and allowed agile, nimble solutions to be found for difficult issues.

- **Are there conflicts in policies or barriers to successful delivery of the air quality objectives?**
Yes. Continuing to invest significant capital expenditure in road upgrades simply encourages people to drive. This causes congestion in built-up areas, and moves the problem from central government to local government.

The roll-out of ‘City Deals’ that continue to invest significant resources into roads is another example where central and local government are continuing to invest significant resources into infrastructure that creates air pollution, makes people more sedentary and reduces Scotland’s ability to deliver its Climate Change aspirations.

In response to the specific questions posed by the Committee

- **Is Scotland on target to have a pilot low emission zone (LEZ) in place by 2018 and should there be more than one LEZ pilot?**

It is difficult to see how a pilot low emission zone can be introduced effectively by 2018. Not only will the project planning take considerable time, the messaging and communication activity required will require time to get the buy-in to make the pilot successful.

The Scottish Government should support the establishment of Low Emission Zones in all Scottish cities. The first in 2018 and then further ones across Scotland before 2020. As well as contributing to cleaner air this will benefit local economies.

- **Is adequate consideration given to air pollution from agriculture?**

Transport is the big issue. Not only will investing inactive and sustainable travel reduce air pollution it will increase people's health and make our economy more effective. Focusing on agricultural emission is a distraction.

**Background**

*Paths for All* is a Scottish charity founded in 1996. We champion everyday walking as the way to a happier, healthier Scotland. We want to get Scotland walking: everyone, everyday, everywhere.

Our aim is to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub. We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

Our work supports the delivery of the [Scottish Government’s Active Scotland Outcomes Framework](#), [National Walking Strategy](#), [The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland](#) and the [Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland](#), community and workplace health walking, path network development and active travel policy development. We are a partnership organisation with 30 national partners. Our
funders include the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Macmillan and The Life Changes Trust.

**Smarter Choices, Smarter Places**

The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) Programme is Paths for All’s grant scheme to support behaviour change initiatives to increase active and sustainable travel. The programme is funded through Transport Scotland and aims to make walking and cycling the modes of choice for short local trips and encourage sustainable travel choices for longer journeys.

Now in its third year, the programme allocates funds to local authorities on a population basis, with the requirement that recipients must match fund the SCSP award by at least 50%. £5million was available to local authorities in 2015/16 and again in 2016/17 and 2017/18. For each programme packages of measures tailored to distinct communities or target audiences must be implemented by the end of each financial year.

Together with Transport Scotland we have produced a series of illustrated case studies that demonstrate the range of approaches to travel behaviour change funded through the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme. The case studies outline how the initiatives were delivered and provide initial impact data.