

# Climate Change Plan call for views: summary of responses for the Transport sector

The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee ran a proactive [Call for Views on the forthcoming Draft Climate Change Plan \(CCP\)](#) from 27 June to 19 September 2025. This SPICe briefing highlights key transport sector issues raised by respondents. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary, but a brief overview of key issues raised. Full responses are published on the Scottish Parliament website: [Published responses for Draft Climate Change Plan Scrutiny 2025 - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#).

A table of acronyms used to refer to the organisations that submitted responses is included at the end of the document.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

Responses were received from public bodies, non-governmental organisations, businesses, industry and stakeholder groups, and professional bodies. However, the following analysis does not break down key themes by type of respondent, as there was no meaningful difference in the issues raised across these groups. Indeed, there is almost complete unanimity amongst respondents on what they considered to be issues of significance, including:

- Action taken to reduce transport emissions to date has fallen far short of what was required to meet emissions reduction goals.
- Electrification of the Scottish car, bus, rail, and ferry fleets is essential to contribute to meeting climate goals, but is not enough in itself. In addition, Scotland needs people to switch from car travel to public transport, walking and cycling which can be delivered through the development of:
  - a comprehensive, reliable, affordable, and accessible public transport network that provides a viable alternative to car travel for as many people as possible.
  - safe, accessible, uninterrupted intra and inter urban walking and cycling networks, segregated from general traffic, to encourage walking, wheeling (includes using a wheelchair or mobility aid as an alternative to walking), and cycling for suitable trips.
- In addition to reducing emissions, such a modal shift (to public and active travel) can produce economic benefits, reduce air, and noise pollution, increase population health, and reduce pressures on the NHS, help tackle poor mental health, and enhance neighbourhood amenity.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The table includes all organisations that submitted a response to the Call for Views. However, not all organisations responded to every section, and not all acronyms appear in each briefing.

- Travel demand management measures, such as road user charging, workplace parking levies, and reallocating road space to pedestrians, cyclists, and buses are a vital element in driving modal shift from car to public and active travel.

A few respondents mentioned decarbonisation of aviation and shipping, such as Dr Tariq Umar from the University of West England Bristol, but most focused solely on surface transport. Key issues raised in response to the six questions posed in the call for views are briefly set out below.

## What are the most important policies needed to achieve the proposed carbon budgets?

There was broad consensus amongst respondents that the following are key policy priorities for reducing transport emissions:

**Electrification:** The speedy uptake of electric cars, vans, goods vehicles, and buses, and a commensurate decrease in the internal combustion engine powered fleet, is seen by most respondents as the key priority for meeting transport climate goals, e.g. the Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN) argue that "...the decarbonisation of vehicles, specifically through electrification, would appear to continue to be the single biggest policy lever". Respondents highlight the need for the roll-out of a comprehensive charging network, and continuing government support for electric vehicle uptake. However, some respondents did highlight the potential for unintended consequences – particularly the lower cost of driving electric cars potentially leading to more driving and less public and active transport use.

**Public transport:** Scotland needs a truly integrated public transport system that provides an attractive alternative to car travel. This should offer travel at a comparable cost to the car, that is comprehensive, accessible, simple to use, benefits from integrated multimodal ticketing, and is supported by clear, accessible information, e.g. South Lanarkshire Council argues that it is "...important to ensure that sustainable modes are easy to use, affordable and attractive for people to use, thus supporting modal shift."

**Walking, wheeling, and cycling (active travel):** The development of accessible, comprehensive, and uninterrupted walking and cycling networks within, and between, villages, towns and cities is essential to encourage those people able to walk, wheel, or cycle to do so for shorter trips. Paths for All highlight that, on top of short trips being made by foot rather than car directly reducing emissions, improved walking and wheeling infrastructure is also vital in driving public transport use, as safe, easy access to bus stops and railway stations is a key factor in its uptake.

**Car use reduction:** A detailed plan setting out car use reduction goals and how these will be delivered is urgently required to deliver transport emissions reductions that cannot be delivered through electrification, something highlighted in recent Climate Change Committee advice to the Scottish Government. This ties in with calls

for the development of public transport infrastructure, active travel networks, and the deployment of traffic demand management measures.

**Flexible policy and budgeting approach:** In considering how to approach the policy priorities identified above, several respondents, including Glasgow Council and the North East Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS), emphasised the need for the Scottish Government to adopt a flexible approach to policy implementation and funding, sufficient to accommodate factors such as local geography, demographics, and population density.

## **When should these policies be introduced, and over what timeframe should they be implemented?**

The consensus amongst respondents was that action is required now and should be taken forward as a matter of urgency, particularly given the slow pace of progress to date. This view is illustrated by the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh: Air Pollution Working Group and Climate Café, which stated that “Transport decarbonisation is a public health emergency as well as a climate imperative. Given the rising toll of air pollution, physical inactivity, and road traffic injuries particularly in deprived areas, key policies must begin immediately, with ambitious targets for 2030 and full implementation by 2040.”

Going beyond this call for immediate action, Highland Council proposed a four-stage process for policy development and delivery, Foundation (2025-26), deployment (2026-30), scale-up (2031-35) and consolidation (2036-40). While others, such as Get Glasgow Moving, suggested specific funding, legislative and institutional changes they considered necessary to deliver emissions reductions by streamlining policy delivery, such as facilitating the efficient development and roll-out of bus service franchising.

## **What are the expected costs of implementing these policies?**

Few respondents attempted to place a monetary value on the transport investment required to meet emissions reductions targets. The few that did focused on a particular sector, such as the Rail, Maritime and Transport trade union, which argued that £10.3 billion needs to be invested in rail schemes by 2035, which would produce economic benefits of between £20 billion and £30 billion.

Instead of providing numbers, several respondents highlighted the potential cost of inaction, such as Transform Scotland which argued that “...the risk of hitting climate change tipping points, in which sudden changes in climatic conditions both within and outwith Scotland prevail, could impose incalculable costs on society.”

Respondents also variously noted the need to establish a clear role for both public and private finance in capital investment, the need for a national cost model, the scope for reallocation of capital budgets from road building to public and active travel schemes, and the potential role of travel demand management (policies and projects primarily aimed at reducing car use – such as congestion charging or

pedestrianisation) in raising funds for capital investment and encouraging drivers to switch to active and sustainable modes.

## What are the expected benefits of these policies?

There was broad agreement amongst respondents that the wider benefits of transport climate action fall within four categories, which are briefly outlined below:

**Environment:** The electrification of the vehicle fleet and increased walking and cycling will help reduce vehicular air and noise pollution. It is worth noting that electric vehicles still produce particulate pollution from tyre and brake wear and that above 20mph most vehicle noise comes from tyres rather than vehicle engines.

**Health:** Air pollution is linked to asthma, heart attacks, strokes, dementia, low birth weight and early death. Reducing vehicular air pollution, a major source of such pollutants, will help reduce the incidence of these issues.

Increased walking, cycling, and wheeling helps improve cardiovascular fitness and reduce type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression, and cognitive decline. Reduced vehicular traffic also results in fewer road traffic injuries and deaths.

The financial savings to the NHS from reduced driving, and an increase in active travel, could be significant, Sustrans Scotland state that “Our 2023 Walking & Cycling Index calculated that across Scotland’s eight cities, 4,251 long-term health conditions were avoided by walking and cycling activity saving the NHS nearly £54million.”

**Economic:** The development and maintenance of public transport and active travel infrastructure sustains jobs in construction, while increased public transport and cycling delivers jobs in engineering, maintenance, and associated services. Cycling UK in Scotland point to the significant economic returns on such investment, highlighting that “The UK Government estimates that for every £1 spent on cycling and walking schemes in the UK, £5.62 worth of benefits are achieved on average”.

**Social:** The availability of affordable, reliable, and accessible transport options increase people’s ability to access greater employment opportunities, health services, education, and social activities. This is particularly important for those without access to a car, or who cannot drive – which tend to be those with lower incomes or those living in deprived or remote communities.

## What do you think the key challenges would be in delivering these policies?

Respondents highlighted a broad range of barriers to achieving emissions reduction in transport. Some barriers were specific to the uptake of electric vehicles, including:

- Limitations on grid capacity could restrict the roll-out of electric vehicle chargers, restricting the ability of people to switch to electric vehicles.

- The higher up-front costs of buying electric vehicles, when compared with petrol and diesel vehicles, acts as a disincentive to their purchase.
- There are skills shortages and supply chain issues affecting electric vehicle maintenance and charger installation.

Other concerns were of a more general nature, such as:

- Transport authorities lack the resources required to deliver the infrastructure needed for a step change in public transport patronage, walking, and cycling.
- The need to tackle an ingrained car centric culture amongst decision makers and the public.
- Siloed thinking and administrative barriers within and between public bodies is limiting effective action to encourage modal shift and the uptake of electric vehicles, e.g. land use planning decisions can lock in car dependency within poorly sited new housing developments.
- Significant infrastructure bottlenecks limit the development of public transport services and increased active travel, e.g. single line sections of the Highland Mainline railway limit increased service provision.

Respondents were clear that tackling these concerns requires strong political leadership - which can drive policy delivery, budget allocations, and counter a growing narrative questioning the reality of human induced climate change and the action required to tackle it. There were clear calls for the development of a pipeline of sustainable transport projects, allowing for the development of robust supply chains and well-trained contractors, supported through stable multi-year funding.

## **How could these policies support a Just Transition for workers and communities?**

Improved public and active travel are of greatest benefit to those living in transport poverty or without access to a car, who are currently excluded from full participation in economic and social activity. As outlined above active travel improves health outcomes. Reduced car use, and resultant falls in congestion, reduces pressure on road networks, benefiting those who have to drive. Travel demand management measures, such as road user charging, provide a new revenue stream to support the development of alternatives to car travel and support for those communities most affected by the switch from fossil fuels.

There were calls for targeted support for workers who need to move from jobs supporting internal combustion engine transport to sustainable modes, with Logistics UK arguing that “With the right investment, existing workers can be reskilled, while apprenticeships and short, flexible training programmes can help young people and career-changers enter the sector with strong green skills.”

There were also calls for Scottish Government financial support for local businesses involved in sustainable transport, such as Alexander Dennis, and the empowerment of communities in transport policy decision making. Stop Climate Chaos Scotland called for the development of a robust, deliverable 'Just Transition Plan' to support the roll-out of the Climate Change Plan.

**Alan Rehfisch, Senior Researcher, SPICe**

**4 November 2025**

## Table of acronyms used to refer to organisations

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full form of respondent</b>
C2050	2050 Climate Group
ABCA	Anderson Bell & Christie Architects
ACC	Aberdeen City Council
AGS	Auditor General for Scotland
ALLIANCE	Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland
BE-ST	Built Environment Smarter Transformation
BEFS	Built Environment Forum Scotland
BHHPA	British Holiday & Home Parks Association
CCAN	Cardross Climate Action Network
No acronym used	Climate Cafe Shetland
CEP	Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde
CERG	Climate Emergency Response Group
CIAT	Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
No acronym used	Colleges Scotland
CreScot	Creative Scotland
CS	Consumer Scotland
No acronym used	Culture for Climate Scotland
CXC	ClimateXChange
No acronym used	Cycling UK
No acronym used	Edinburgh Communities Climate Action Network
EDC	East Dunbartonshire Council
EHA	Existing Homes Alliance
EMEC	European Marine Energy Centre
EST	Energy Saving Trust
FDFS	Food and Drink Federation Scotland
FES	Future Economy Scotland
FOES	Friends of the Earth Scotland
GCC	Glasgow City Council
GGM	Get Glasgow Moving
HC	Highland Council
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HfS	Homes for Scotland
IKEA	IKEA Ltd
IPPR Scotland	Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland
No acronym used	Liquid Gas UK

No acronym used	Logistics UK
RESPECT project	LUNZ Hub RESPECT Project
MCS	The MCS Foundation
NECCUS	North East Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage
NESTRANS	Nestrans (Regional Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire)
NHS Lothian	National Health Scotland Lothian
NFUS	National Farmers Union Scotland
NS	NatureScot
No acronym used	Nourish Scotland
No acronym used	Orkney Islands Council
No acronym used	Paths for All
No acronym used	Peat-free Partnership Scotland Advocacy Group
PHS	Public Health Scotland
No acronym used	Perth and Kinross Council
No acronym used	Propertymark
PS	Police Scotland
QS	Quakers in Scotland
QMS	Quality Meat Scotland
RCPE	Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh: Air Pollution Working Group and Climate Café
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
RMT	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
RSPB Scotland	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
SAP	Scottish Agroecology Partnership
SC	Scottish Care
SCCS	Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
SE	Scotland Excel
SCIS	Scottish Climate Intelligence Service
SEDA	Scottish Ecological Design Association
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SEStran	South East Scotland Transport Partnership
SF	Stockfree Farming
SLC	South Lanarkshire Council
SPT	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
SRAEHL	Scottish Research Alliance for Energy, Homes and Livelihoods
No acronym used	Seafood Scotland
SSN	Sustainable Scotland Network

StC	Stirling Council
SuSc	Sustrans Scotland
SWA	Scottish Wholesale Association
TACTRAN	Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership
No acronym used	Transform Scotland
UKERC	UK Energy Research Centre
UoGSoL	University of Glasgow, School of Law
UWE Bristol	University of the West of England Bristol
WWF Scotland	World Wide Fund for Nature Scotland