

# Consultation Response

## The Scottish Budget, walking and wheeling

**2.2.26**

If you have any questions about this response, please contact our policy team: [policy@walkingscotland.org.uk](mailto:policy@walkingscotland.org.uk)



**Your national walking and wheeling charity.**

## Who we are

Walking Scotland is a charity that helps make walking and wheeling a part of everyday life. We promote the benefits of walking and wheeling on our physical, social, and mental health. Our programmes connect communities and inspire positive behaviour change. We also improve places and spaces to walk and wheel.

We're an advocate for making walking and wheeling inclusive. We work with partners and local communities to reduce barriers. This ensures everyone has the chance to walk or wheel everywhere they go. By focusing on walking and wheeling, we're helping to solve some of Scotland's biggest challenges, from health inequalities to the climate-nature emergency.

We will achieve our vision and mission by working towards the key themes from our [Step It Up strategy](#):

- Walking and wheeling is for everyone
- Walking and wheeling is for everywhere
- Walking and wheeling is for every day

# Our response

## Net Zero Committee: The Scottish Budget, walking and wheeling

### The Active and Sustainable Travel budget

The Active and Sustainable Travel budget line in the Transport section of the Scottish Budget has been allocated £226 million for 2026/27.

The Active and Sustainable Travel budget line in the Transport section of the 2025/26 Scottish Budget was allocated £189 million.

This therefore appears to represent an increased commitment.

The budget for walking and wheeling reflects an ambition to enhancing active travel options and infrastructure, aiming to create a more sustainable and healthy transport system for Scotland.

While we're encouraged to see increased investment in active and sustainable travel, this must translate into a clear priority for walking and wheeling, which are the most accessible, sustainable forms of transport.

Walking and wheeling sit at the top of the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. They must be resourced as such. This is an essential commitment if investment is to deliver real, meaningful change for people across Scotland.

Transport is the largest source of climate emissions in Scotland (36%),<sup>1</sup> with limited reduction in the sector during the last 30 years.<sup>2</sup> A shift from driving to active travel will help address the climate-nature emergency. Walking and wheeling reduce road congestion, carbon emissions, and improve air quality. They also form part of most public transport journeys.

### A National Path Fund

A dedicated National Path Fund is a practical and necessary way to ensure increased active travel investment delivers for walking and wheeling on the ground. The need has never been greater.

Walking Scotland manages the only remaining national path fund available for communities in Scotland. This fund, supported by the Scottish Government, will end in early 2026. Without a replacement and sustained investment from the active and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-2021/chapter-13-environment/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/06/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/documents/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/govscot:document/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018.pdf>

sustainable travel budget, communities will lose vital support for maintaining and improving local path networks.

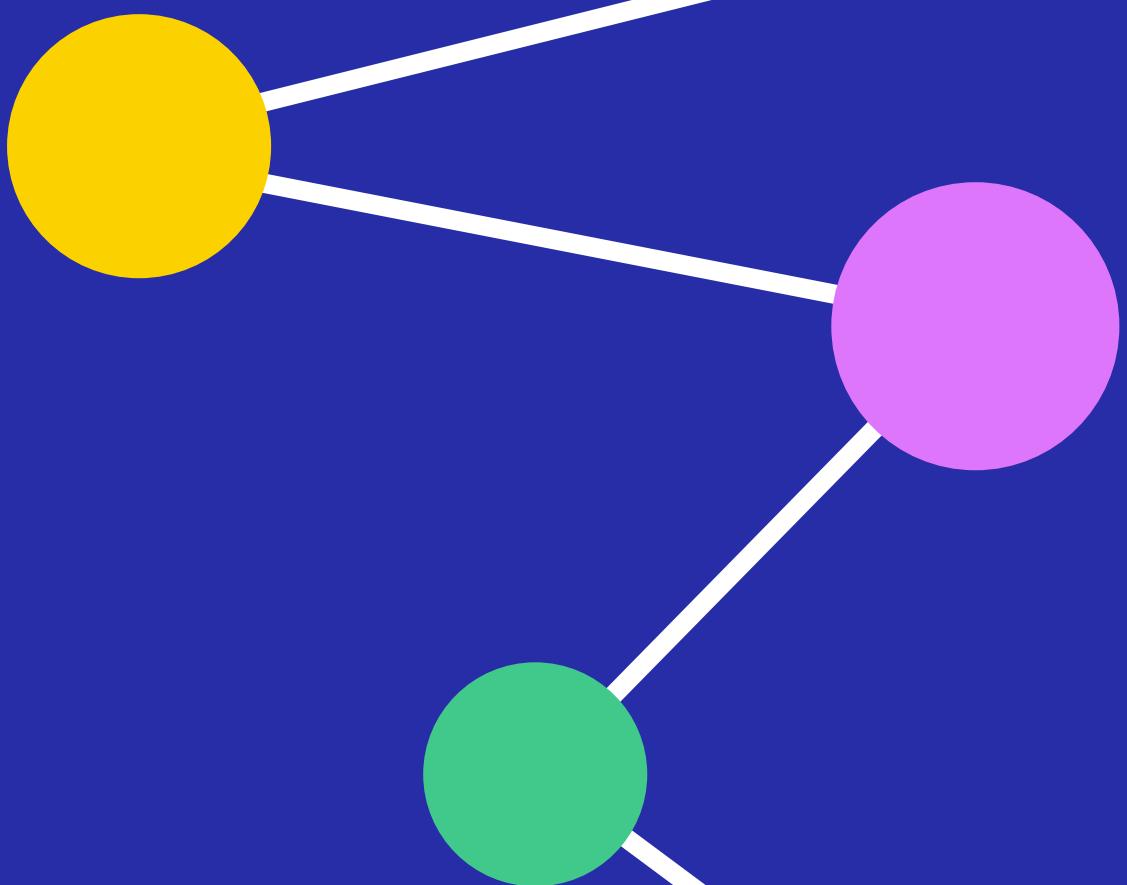
Scotland needs renewed, multiyear funding to ensure everyone has access to safe, well-maintained paths. This investment is critical to ensuring that increased active and sustainable travel budget enables more people across Scotland to choose walking and wheeling as part of daily life.

### **The Power of Walking**

Together with Living Streets Scotland, we've published '[The Power of Walking – A Walking and Wheeling Manifesto for 2026](#).' It sets out how long-term investment, inclusive infrastructure and safer streets can support climate, health and transport outcomes.

While this response focuses on the Scottish Budget, our manifesto provides further detail on the wider policy context, and highlights a clear opportunity for Scotland to lead the way in active, inclusive and sustainable travel.

Putting walking and wheeling first can deliver strong returns for Scotland by helping people stay healthier for longer, cutting pressure on the NHS, and supporting local jobs and businesses. Investment in walking and wheeling delivers exceptional value.



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Paths for All Partnership (known as Walking Scotland) is a Scottish charity, SC025535, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and registered as a company limited by guarantee, 1068554.