Dear Graeme,

Air Quality in Scotland

Thank you for your letter of 5 October 2017 concerning the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee’s inquiry on air quality and requesting clarification on several points relating to Low Emission Zones. These points are addressed below.

When will the first LEZ scheme be announced, and how long will it be between the announcement and the operation of the LEZ?

The First Minister announced on 10 October 2017 that Glasgow will be the first Scottish city to establish an LEZ. The Glasgow LEZ will be put in place by the end of 2018.

What technological infrastructure will be required as part of the first LEZ?

As part of the Building Scotland’s Low Emission Zone consultation, we are considering the technology infrastructure required to monitor and enforce our LEZs. The Scottish Government’s preference is that Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras are utilised as the primary basis for monitoring and enforcing LEZs.

This consultation is also examining the potential for lead-in times. The first LEZ in Glasgow would see the lead-in time start once the Glasgow LEZ design is published by Glasgow City Council, and continue for a period of time after it becomes operational. This approach would provide vehicle owners with time to adopt or upgrade their vehicle, well before the start of any Glasgow LEZ enforcement regime, which we do not expect to be implemented immediately on the establishment of the Glasgow LEZ.

How is the Scottish Government working with local authorities to ensure that, in terms of air quality, the issue is not merely moved to the areas surrounding the LEZ?

LEZ Delivery Groups are being established for Scotland’s four biggest cities, with representation from City Councils, Transport Scotland, SEPA and Regional Transport Partnerships. These Groups will be using air quality models and transport models to
determine the most effective LEZ boundary location, and thereafter to assess the emission and transport impacts of LEZs on areas within and beyond the LEZ boundaries. We will also be utilising the Place Standard to assess the societal impact of LEZs across similar geographies.

The LEZ Delivery Groups will be supporting the four Councils to prepare submissions to the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland with respect to Traffic Regulation Conditions (TRC). This will enable new TRCs to be created for the bus sector which will apply to bus routes that run both within and beyond the LEZ boundaries. Therefore, the benefits of reduced bus emissions will be realised beyond the LEZ itself.

Approximate timescales for implementation following the consultation of LEZ in Scotland’s four major cities

The 2017/18 Programme for Government states that we will work with local authorities to introduce LEZs into Scotland’s four biggest cities by 2020, and into other Air Quality Management Areas by 2023 where appraisals support this approach.

Only when local authorities create their LEZ final designs and consult upon the city-specific LEZ proposals, will we know for certain the timescale for LEZ implementation across Scotland’s four major cities.

The role and promotion of active travel in establishing the first LEZ

The Scottish Government has committed to doubling the investment in active travel initiatives from £40 million to £80 million per year from 2018/19. This approach will support our Active Travel Vision and the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland vision of 10% of everyday journeys by bike by 2020.

We are clear that LEZs should interact with a host of other transport polices, including actions to tackle congestion, promote uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles and support modal shift towards more active travel and public transport. These actions will help make our towns and cities more pleasant spaces to live, work and spend leisure time in.

Active travel will make our towns and cities friendlier and safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. It will help to revitalise urban neighbourhoods, providing economic opportunities for local businesses whilst improving public health and reducing harmful emissions.

We will also be appointing an Active Nation Commissioner to ensure we deliver world class infrastructure across Scotland.

I hope you find this information helpful and I look forward to attending the Committee’s meeting on 5 December to give evidence as part of the inquiry, along with the Minister for Transport and the Islands.

Yours,

[Signature]

ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM