

Can We Reduce Car Use Fairly?

A Briefing on Transport



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Illustrations (pages 6, 11 and 17) are by Dundee based artist Kirsty Lockhart, who participated in the Commissions town hall session described on page 9. Her exhibition “Journeys on the 28 Bus” was on display at the Federation Gallery, Dundee from 28 April 2023 to 27 May 2023.

Photographs by Chris Watt Photography.

Background

The Commission is tasked with providing scrutiny and advice on the development of the Scottish Government’s just transition plans for economic sectors and regions of the country. Following the publication of the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan in January 2023, the next three draft plans we expect the Scottish Government to produce cover the following sectors:

- Transport
- Built Environment and Construction
- Land Use and Agriculture

In advance of the publication of these draft plans, the Commission held three workshops April-June 2023, each supported by a programme of engagement with impacted groups, in order to agree advice to the Scottish Government on critical questions that will require to be addressed in the upcoming sectoral plans.

Given the breadth of live issues for each sector, each workshop aimed to bring into focus a specific theme or “challenge”. The sector briefings that form the outputs from these workshops are not comprehensive treatments of just transition issues within a given sector. The Commission will require to carry out further engagement, information-gathering and deliberation to support robust scrutiny of the upcoming just transition plans.

In April, the Commission met in Dundee to investigate [the justice considerations of car reduction policies.](#)

This sector briefing describes the challenge ahead for policymakers. It provides a record of the format and participants in the Commission’s workshop as well as the key findings and insights shared in these sessions. The briefing includes the Commission’s key messages to the Scottish Government in developing policy for a just transition in transportation.

The challenge

The Scottish Government has set a target of reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030. The existing transport system is already highly inequitable, and rail, bus and ferry services need urgent improvements. Policies aimed at limiting car use could make this worse unless a clear, practical and affordable strategy is developed to tackle social isolation, support low-paid essential workers, expand access for people with mobility issues, and make affordable places and communities that have less need for car travel to access goods, services, amenities and facilities.



Commissioners meeting with local transport users at Central Baptist Church, Dundee

Key messages

1. A just transition for transport requires a whole system approach.

The nature, pace and scale of the challenge requires policy action that goes well beyond piecemeal, regionally limited, or opportunistic efforts. A just transition cannot be achieved by working in silos or relying on single “silver bullet” policies when what is required is a package of policies combining “carrots” and “sticks” that will need to be carefully differentiated based on specific local and place-based needs. After decades of centralisation, a just transition for transport must be supported by strategic action in terms of spatial policy, land use planning and a new funding model capable of delivering the required investment. The current transport system is deeply unfair and the transition offers a chance to make it fairer, as well as significant opportunities in terms of supporting a healthier population, improving access to employment and education and the quality of suburban neighbourhoods.

2. A redistributive strategy is needed to achieve public consent for the big changes.

There are no realistic ‘win-win’ solutions available and the core just transition principle of achieving a fair distribution of costs and benefits must be applied. Revenues raised from measures such as road user charges, particularly on those on highest incomes driving unnecessarily large cars, must be redistributed to achieve demonstrable benefits for public transport users and those most disadvantaged by the current transport system. There cannot be a perception that wealthy people are “getting away with it” or gaming the system if trust in the required measures is to be sustained, or that ordinary people are subject to inequitable charges relative to freight and aviation. A long-term public information campaign will be needed to build collective understanding of what action is being taken, how full compliance is being achieved, progress reporting, challenges and positive impacts.

3. The key risk is social isolation.

The needs of vulnerable groups must be central to decision-making through proper consultation and engagement to ensure the transport system meets the needs of disabled people, those with caring responsibilities and lower income workers particularly in socially essential fields such as social care. Policymakers should identify, and share clear steps taken to mitigate, the consistent gap between their experience as users of the transport system and the experience of those at the margins.



16.9.22



The Commission were hosted at Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc where they were given a tour of the facilities

Workshop overview - day one

Scottish Government update

The Commission met with officials from the Scottish Government's Just Transition Unit and Transport Scotland to discuss work in progress to develop a just transition plan for Transport. Officials set out how the plan will expand further on the transport segment within the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan and the latest thinking regarding how to achieve the planned 20% reduction on car kilometres by 2030 in a fair way, including collaboration required between national and local government. They also received an update on the research currently being undertaken to inform policy development.

Local and regional engagement

The Commission met with Dundee City Council and Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN) to discuss the challenges around transport and the Council's plans for increasing modal share by public transport, active travel, and zero emission vehicles. The Commission heard about:

- Analysis of the existing transport system in Dundee and surrounding area, key policy challenges and achievements
- Policy measures in development or under consideration for decarbonising the transport system in Dundee and the surrounding area
- How the fairness considerations and economic impact around these policies may be assessed, including the equitable sharing of costs and benefits
- Specific challenges in relation to sequencing, engagement and communication of new policies to ensure public understanding and buy-in



The Commission had a short tour from CEO Greig Coull of the facilities at Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc.

The Commission visited Dundee's electric charging infrastructure across the city to learn about the Council's approach to rolling out charging hubs and the engagement they have undertaken with local communities. They visited several locations in Dundee and heard about a number of projects including:

- Three key charging hubs Lochee and Princes Street and the new site at Clepington Road
- The electrification of the Council's bin lorry fleet
- Pop-up chargers which have been installed at the V&A which have been installed to respond to the issues around street clutter



Commissioners being shown pop-up chargers which have been installed at the Waterfront next to the V&A museum.

Town hall

In partnership with Dundee Fighting for Fairness, a collective of Dundonians who advocate for people facing poverty and inequality in the city, the Commission hosted an open event at the Central Baptist Church to hear from members of the local community about their experience of transport in and around the city.

In total, 34 people joined four rotating roundtable discussions as Commissioners heard directly from people with various lived experiences about how they are being served by the transport system and the changes they would like to see for a fair and sustainable transport system.



Commissioners meeting with local transport users at Central Baptist Church, Dundee

Workshop overview - day two

The Commission was hosted by the Change Centre, Dundee. As the headquarters for Street Soccer Scotland, the Change Centre works with the local community to address issues such as mental health, homelessness, substance misuse, loneliness and isolation, with football themed personal development programmes for socially disadvantaged adults and young people across Scotland.

International approaches

The Commission held a roundtable bringing together academics and policymakers to review models and best practices on car reduction. Participants were as follows:

- Laurie Pickup, International Director of Transport and Mobility Planning at Vectos Ltd
- Jan-Jelle Witte, Scientific Researcher from the KiM Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis
- Isak Solomon, Mobility advisor at Oslo Climate Department.

The session focused on lessons learned from other jurisdictions regarding car use reduction and fairness considerations from expert policymakers and advisors working in this field.

Health, mobility and accessibility

The Commission held a roundtable to discuss equity and health issues of the transport sector. Participants were as follows:

- David Hunter, Mobility and Access Committee Scotland
- Elliot Cooper, Mobility and Access Committee Scotland
- Sheila Hands, NHS Equality and Access Group
- Susan Johnstone, Carers Support Network
- Joanna Teuton, Public Health Scotland
- Anna Gale, Public Health Scotland

The Commission heard first-hand accounts and experience of using the transport networks and the limitations around access for those with disabilities.



Insights and findings

The following is a list of key discussion points shared in the course of the Commission's workshop in Dundee.

Car reduction

- Scottish Government and local authorities will require a common framework for implementation of car reduction measures with the UK Government, to ensure the costs of transport (including environmental costs) are fairly priced and reflect Scotland's specific geography and dispersal of its population
- A combination of measures is needed, as opposed to single policies in isolation, providing attractive alternatives (carrot) and measures such as road user charging (stick).
- A just transition approach should highlight not only groups that have less access to transport under present car-dominated system and need to be supported to travel more, but also excessive users currently responsible for highly disproportionate and avoidable emissions. A just transition approach must deliver for low paid workers in areas such as social care where current alternatives to car use are unfeasible.
- Significant gains can be made through reduction of both urban, shorter-distance journeys and long distance journeys, while recognising the lack of alternative transport in rural areas. Plans will need to specifically address both.
- If "affordability" is to be a key term for establishing the fairness or otherwise of car reduction and other decarbonisation measures, it will need to be clearly defined to support the credibility and clarity of proposals.
- Just transition plans for transport should give due consideration to light and heavy goods vehicles, aviation (including private jet usage) and shipping. Lifeline aviation will need to be distinguished from leisure and business travel.



Commissioners touring the EV charging hub at Princes Street, Dundee



- Individual behavioural change will be critical, however institutions and economic sectors that are major generators of traffic also have a critical role to play, for example employers, businesses and tourism.
- Buses play a critical role for residents of Dundee, where 42 percent of households have no access to a car. Most car mileage in and around the city is generated from rural areas and small towns, partly due to a lack of sufficient public transport provision. This applies to all five cities in Scotland, where approximately 80% of the population resides.
- Bus services in Dundee have significantly reduced over recent years, while ticket prices have increased, with the impacts of these changes being disproportionately experienced by those most disadvantaged. Just transition plans will need to recognise the failure of largely privatised delivery and loss of local democratic control on bus services, a significant factor in these negative recent trends.
- A clear risk is that measures such as road user charging, low emissions zones and parking charges may disproportionately impact those with least choice and ability to pay. There is significant and understandable anxiety among policymakers and clear and decisive leadership matched by adequate and upfront funding will be required if necessary measures are to be taken in a fair way and in a timely manner.
- Detailed equalities impact assessments are required to support a fair policy package.
- Car-sharing has an important role to play and progress on this has been set back by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The current low quality and lack of democratic control of public transport provision provides a clear opportunity for the transition to achieve tangible benefits.
- Investments of public money in high cost projects such as electric charging infrastructure and fleet electrification must be subject to equality proofed cost benefit analysis in relation to carbon reduced for capital investment, especially at a time of budget constraint.



Commissioners touring the EV charging hub at Queen Street, Broughty Ferry

Communication and engagement

- A plan is needed to build the broad social buy-in for the big changes ahead. Sudden changes implemented without proper sequencing, communication and public understanding of the costs and benefits associated with new policies will have an adverse effect and may limit the possibility of further changes.
- The benefits of moving beyond our current arrangements centred on cars, and of current inequalities associated with the current transport system, will need to be effectively communicated at local, regional and national level so that these are much better and much more widely understood than is currently the case.
- Just transition planning should recognise and take steps to mitigate the gap between the experiences and priorities of those working to implement policy shifts and most users of the transport system, particularly those who are social disadvantaged. Policies should be supported by evidence that establishes both the most disadvantaged and advantaged places and communities so that redistributive policies can be targeted to specific solutions required.
- Policies must consider the lived experience of marginalised groups, particularly groups with protected characteristics, carers, and low-income households.
- There is a range of public opinion towards car use reduction which spans favourable to unfavourable. A common assumption of majority resistance to these policies is not supported by the research. Policy-makers should assume ingrained attitudes and assumptions persisting as opposed to rapid buy-in and implementation of best practice approaches.
- Illustrative journeys to support just transition planning for transport may be most effective and meaningful as composite case studies based on engagement with communities, particularly those currently disadvantaged by the transport system



Commissioners meeting with local transport users at Central Baptist Church, Dundee

Access

- A just transition approach will need to include plans to ensure the safety (including at night) of public transport users, particularly women, young people and the elderly and to reduce anti-social behaviour. This was identified as a significant gendered disincentive to public transport usage, further exacerbating the risk of social isolation. Identifying and addressing the root cause of such anti-social behaviour will support just transition outcomes.
- Social isolation experienced as a result of existing transport systems limits the ability of people, particularly those from socially disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities, to access services and amenities and to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities, cities, and regions, as well as to the enjoyment of Scotland, its landscape and biodiversity. A just transition for transport would expand such access rather than further reduce it.
- Transport poverty should be viewed as a serious public health problem, with a multiplier effect on outcomes. It also has significant implications on peoples access to jobs, education and training and the labour market.
- Care should be taken to ensure that new infrastructure and equipment takes account of the specific needs of people with disabilities including those affecting mobility and visual impairment. More sustainable vehicles, including EV's and taxis, will need to be 'future-proofed' for disabled users to avoid replicating existing accessibility issues, and active travel infrastructure
- A high quality pedestrian environment co-ordinated with public transport access to it, particularly for people with disabilities, will be an important policy goal supported by adequate data and monitoring.
- Accurate up-to-date information about public transport delivered via mobile apps (as well as offline formats as far as possible) enhance the experience of users and the accessibility of services.
- Inadequate lifeline services and transport access to and from islands due to extremely poor ferry services will need to be addressed directly by just transition planning, and islands assessments should be undertaken as a core part of policy development, not after the fact.

Place-based approach

- Just transition plans for transport should recognise the challenges created by decades of centralisation in spatial planning and approaches that have centred and incentivised the use of private cars and rebalance and redress these to deliver a more equitable transport system. The positive opportunities and benefits associated with these changes should be identified and communicated with strategic work to ensure these are optimised.
- Policies will require to be differentiated based on specific local and place-based needs, including urban fringes, rural areas and islands. The scale and pace of change may be quite different for different regions and the rationale for this should be communicated clearly to support public understanding.
- Demand-responsive, digitally connected transport has recently been effectively developed and could have an important role in meeting regional transport needs and connecting settlements.
- Place based approaches must factor in socio-economic differences within a given area, and not assume an homogenous economic and social fabric.

Who pays?

- The cost of public transport was identified as a problem, particularly for those on lower incomes. The benefits that public transportation free at the point of use would have in addressing transport poverty and systemic inequalities as well as supporting productivity and ensuring a level of protection for those who may be most at risk from adverse effects of measures such as road user charging was underlined on a number of occasions. Age based free transport systems do not necessarily address issues of poverty and access. The first Commission recommended trials of free bus transport in urban and rural settings and note that these have still to be delivered.
- The current funding system available to local government in places such as Dundee encourages a piecemeal, opportunistic approach as opposed to joined-up, holistic strategic planning. This pattern produces isolated examples of necessary innovations, but limited possibilities to scale progress up to the level required and widens inequalities rather than reducing them. Significant further work is now required to achieve joined-up financing for the just transition in transport across the country. The privatised delivery model is a barrier to local democratic initiatives and investment.



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