

## Towards a Low Carbon Economy for Scotland

Response on behalf of CTC (Scotland)  
(CTC is the national association of cyclists)

We welcome the opportunity to comment on this document. This response is in two parts: first, some quotations from the document (*italics*) followed by comments on these; second, a wider-ranging discussion based on the specific questions, 1 and 2a, to which the document invites a reply. We focus entirely on the issues involving transport.

### Part 1

*'Low carbon' is a way of thinking, behaving and operating that minimises carbon emissions while enabling sustainable use of natural resources, economic growth and quality of life improvements.*"(Ian Marchant, Foreword)

*In the transition to a low carbon way of life we face a profound and all-encompassing period of change... (Part 2, 1<sup>st</sup> para)*

***We will have evolved our understanding and behaviours.*** *Our attitude to the use of energy will be very different. We will live in a world of precious energy and will be far more conscious of our own energy use and its cost...*(Part 2, 4<sup>th</sup> bullet)

*By using less energy we will adopt healthier lifestyles (ibid.).*

We welcome all the above, particularly the mention of thinking and behaving, quality (as opposed to quantity) of life, a profound period of change, attitudes to the use of energy, consciousness of our energy use, and healthier lifestyles. We shall return to all these issues below.

*The Government Economic Strategy defines sustainable economic growth as "building a dynamic and growing economy that will provide prosperity and opportunities for all, while ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life too".(Part 4, 1<sup>st</sup> para)*

An interesting definition, but worrying, since it does not necessarily include anything to do with sustainability in the planetary sense ('better quality of life' is ambiguous). By this definition, building new trunk roads and motorways would qualify, no matter how unsustainable they are both in construction and their effect in encouraging longer and more frequent journeys. The definition differs significantly from normal definitions of sustainability and we believe the Government is making the change deliberately so that road projects can be included. The Government is in danger of reducing 'sustainable' to a catchphrase, particularly in the phrase 'sustainable economic growth' which they are now using when they mean simply 'economic growth' (for example the Transport Minister recently publicly referred to a set of road upgrades on the A77 and A75 as 'sustainable economic growth').

*The [Climate Change] Act also brings a new duty for all public bodies to contribute to delivery of the targets and to help deliver adaptation to the*

*impacts of climate change and to act in a sustainable way.(Part 4, para 2).*

We wonder if 'all public bodies' includes Transport Scotland, with its current £3bn road-building projects, the fruits of which will **increase** carbon emissions for the foreseeable future?

*Having adopted ambitious and legally binding emission reduction targets, Scotland is positioning itself as an example of best practice to other countries. When we can demonstrate that we have met our ambitious targets while growing our economy, and show what actions we have taken to bring that about, we will have a very powerful message for other countries (ibid.).*

We agree that Scotland should act as a model for others. Unfortunately our current transport policies, with their emphasis on road-building, are anything but. Indeed, in international transport circles Scotland is something of a laughing-stock, for continuing a programme of urban motorway building when other European countries are focussing on modal shift away from the private car.

*The systemic challenge that a low carbon transition represents is not something that either governments or industry can achieve without the active engagement and commitment of individuals and communities. Many of the changes in behaviour necessary to de-carbonise our lifestyles rely on decisions taken by all of us as individuals and by the shared decisions we take as communities. Successful transition therefore must be a partnership between each of us as individuals, the communities and places where we live and work, and our local and national government.*

*The Climate Change (Scotland) Act requires the Scottish Government to produce a public engagement strategy by the end of 2010 and, to complement that, the Government has embarked on a programme of research into behaviour change to reduce carbon emissions. This programme will inform policy development on how individuals and households - at home, in their communities and in their workplace - can be enabled and encouraged to contribute to meeting Scotland's climate change targets.(Part 4: Innovation etc)*

We welcome this emphasis on changes in behaviour and the commitment of individuals. We believe that much can be achieved by raising public awareness of carbon use and showing how it can be reduced. In the last sentence we would add: "and in their modes of travel".

*Finally, a range of commentators highlight that 'green' stimulus packages can be relatively job-intensive (for example, loft insulation, energy efficiency, woodland creation) and in a time of recession and sluggish growth, such measures can be of significant benefit in reducing unemployment (Part 4, Green Recovery).*

We agree, and we believe that measures to change travel behaviour can generate significant numbers of jobs, for example:

\* 'Smart' travel – teams of advisers, for individuals, families, workplaces, as has been pioneered by Sustrans and currently being undertaken by The Bike Station's 'Better Way to Work'.

\*Build and operate 'Bike Hubs' at public transport nodes like stations, to offer bike storage, hire, repair, maps etc.

- Switch the emphasis on new roads to maintenance of existing roads, to encouraging cycling and walking;
- Teams of advisers on driving more fuel-economically;
- Advertising campaigns to change motorists' negative views on road tax and make them aware that road taxation does not cover ALL the costs imposed by motoring on society, and that consequently motoring is being *subsidised* by the taxpayer.

*Transport as a sector accounts for over a quarter of the total energy consumed in Scotland. Approximately 99% of the energy consumed in the transport sector comes directly from oil-based fuels, such as petrol and diesel, with the remaining 1% from electricity. There is a strong link between our work to improve energy efficiency in transport and that to reduce subsequent greenhouse gas emissions. It is, therefore, crucial that we improve the energy efficiency of our transport system, through the introduction of low-carbon technologies, improving the fuel efficiency of fossil-fuelled vehicles and actively reducing the absolute levels of fuel consumed.*

*Reducing the amount of travel while increasing fuel efficiencies offers the greatest potential for reducing energy demand in the longer term in a cost-effective manner. Policies that promote walking, cycling and improving the urban environment to make non-motorised modes of transport safer, quicker and more attractive are important in managing the demand for motorised transport. Measures to make better use of existing transport infrastructure by increasing the people-carrying, rather than vehicle-carrying, capacity of Scotland's networks are being developed. We also need to work towards developing a social / working pattern than minimises the need to travel as well (Part 4, Sustainable Transport).*

We welcome this emphasis, particularly on 'reducing the need to travel' and 'reducing the absolute levels of fuel consumed'. 'Improving fuel efficiency of vehicles' however has to be balanced with measures to ensure that consequent savings in costs do not merely result in more miles driven.

*Scotland's National Transport Strategy ( NTS) introduced the three strategic outcomes of: improved journey times and connections; reduced emissions; and improved quality, accessibility and affordability (ibid.).*

The NTS has a lot of good things in it, but the Government's spending priorities (current and previous Governments) ignore the emphasis on walking and cycling, and, in fact, turn the NTS's travel hierarchy upside-down.

Part 2:

**Discussion questions:**

## **1. Does this document sufficiently communicate the vision, drivers and implications of a low carbon Scottish economy? How could this be improved?**

1 The Government's current transport policies, with their emphasis on road-building and on increasing air travel, will have to be altered if they are to convince us, the public, that they are serious about low carbon and climate change. The Government has to recognise its own duplicity – that it relies on sales of fossil fuel for its tax revenues, just as it does for other social evils like tobacco and alcohol.

We might be persuaded that the Government is serious about climate change if they implemented their own policies, as in the NTS, and put walking and cycling as the top priorities and public transport next.

The emphasis must clearly be on walking and cycling too, since public transport is “99% fossil fuelled” and can only become 'lower carbon' by increased efficiency.

2 The document is very disappointing and unambitious in the measures it suggests for reducing transport emissions. It only envisages a switch to electric cars, without exploring a) where the extra electricity is to come from, given our modest proportion, to date, of renewables; and b) the other disadvantages of electric vehicles, namely (and in brief):

Weight of the batteries, meaning waste of valuable fuel in simply transporting the power source, as with petrol engines;

Batteries need rare elements in production – these will become increasingly expensive as demand soars;

Re-fuelling requires expensive infrastructure, which will probably have to be paid for by the taxpayer – yet another subsidy to motorists;

Re-fuelling infrastructure will probably add to street clutter;

Persuading motorists to switch will require more input of taxpayer money, like the 'scrapage scheme' – yet another motoring subsidy;

Electric cars unlikely to be built in Scotland and will have to be imported, thus draining our balance of payments, and providing jobs elsewhere.

## **2. Section 2 identifies a range of low carbon economic opportunities based on Scotland's key strengths and opportunities and aligned with growing global market opportunities and domestic regulatory and legislative drivers.**

### **a. are there significant additional opportunities that should be addressed by the Low Carbon Strategy?**

The LCS could offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change our behaviour, adopt a better and healthier lifestyle, create new types of job, and significantly raise our quality of life while reducing our carbon consumption.

The western world currently offers two contrasting lifestyles: the US model,

and the model adopted by some European countries such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. We in Scotland have to decide which we are to go for. Currently we incline towards the former. Let me illustrate with a small scenario:

Uncle Fat Sam, in the US, keeps his car keys by the front door and never leaves home without them. He drives to work (stress from congestion etc), does a day's work in the office (more stress), drives home, and arrives exhausted, collapses in front of the TV. He bought a subscription to a gym, but hardly ever goes as he hasn't the energy. He drives there, of course, and afterwards buys a can of fizzy drink, thus undoing any good the exercise has done.

Fat Sam is over-weight, if not obese, and has to pay high health insurance premiums as a consequence.

He's in a bind – he lives in the suburbs, miles from work (who could live in the inner-city?), there's no public transport, so as he sees it he has no choice but to drive.

All in all, not much of a life.

Slim Wim lives in the Netherlands. His city has an excellent roads and paths infrastructure totally oriented towards cycling, there are lights to help him across junctions, and he cycles to work. He also takes his kids to school by bike, and gets them on their own bikes as soon as they're able. He and his wife might also do their shopping by bike.

We all know that cycling is healthy, that journey times are predictable and quick, that it reduces congestion, that it's friendly to the environment, and cheap.

But Wim takes all that for granted. The reason he cycles is because it's fun, it relieves stress, and gives him a huge sense of freedom. If he meets a friend on a street corner he can stop and chat – how else could he do that? His day job is stressful but the ride home is a recovery, while his morning ride in raises his alertness and readiness to work.

Wim doesn't pay a gym subscription – he doesn't need to. In the evening he's refreshed enough to go out for a game or to a cafe to socialise. He hardly ever goes to a doctor and has no weight problems.

His lifestyle is as different from Fat Sam's as chalk and cheese.

What about Scotland? Scotland has two characters:

Gormless Gordon has a lifestyle more like Sam's than Wim's. His love of his car is almost an addiction – hang on, IS it an addiction? For his views and opinions he reads, uncritically, the tabloid press, so he believes the Government is

always out to 'fleece' the motorist, when in fact the taxes he pays don't actually cover all the costs.

Gordon also works at a sedentary job, and drives to work. He's overweight and does almost no exercise. Luckily he has the NHS to fall back on, so he hasn't to worry about health insurance, but of course he's paying for it indirectly through his NI and taxes. If he and millions like him led healthier lifestyles, he wouldn't have to pay so much. All his addictions – fags, beer, the car – are costing him, and the community he lives in, dearly.

Caring Karen is very different. She is aware of the choices she makes in life. She knows that car use is more than just buying a vehicle and filling up. She can see how her streets are clogged up. In the daytime it's a moving clutter (congestion) and at night it's street clutter – which stops kids from playing in the street, and blocks the sight lines, making conditions dangerous for young and old alike.

She knows, too, that cars take up vast amounts of otherwise-valuable land, to provide parking at work, parking at the shops, parking at all other destinations – schools, leisure centres etc. And she can see how towns and cities are sprawling as a result of this land loss, and that this in turn creates more car demand.

She's heard reports, too, of where the oil comes from; mainly from countries with harsh, brutal, repressive (especially of women), violent, undemocratic and often unstable regimes, whose woes are largely caused by exploitation of the oil wealth, and she realises what a curse the possession of oil resources can be.

Karen realises that there's far more to cars than the dangers posed by the front and back ends. She would like to live in a parallel Scotland – one with all the lovely country, historic cities, and nice people - but with fewer cars to spoil it, towns and cities where people can live within walking or cycling distance of all they need, and good public transport to cater for the longer journeys.

The LCS can steer us (Scotland's future) towards the lifestyles of Gordon or Karen. Electric cars means Gordon carries on as before – 'business as usual'. No "revolution" (cf Swinney's introductory remarks) here. If cars could be fuelled from renewables (it's a big 'if'), there would still be all the other costs associated with car use: unhealthy lifestyle, land take, sprawling towns, road casualties, enforcement costs, loss of street freedom etc.

The alternative – the real revolution – is to tackle car use, thus reducing carbon consumption in the short term, and raising quality of life in the longer term. Here are some suggestions as to how:

Step 1: Combat the tabloids' pernicious influence, through campaigns to inform the public a) that motoring does not pay its way and is subsidised in many different ways, and b) that damage from the front and back ends of the car are only the beginning of its costs to our lives, raising issues of land use, urban sprawl, and health. (Hint – maybe a word in the shell-like ear of Rupert Murdoch might help things along).

Step 2: Spend the money otherwise devoted to road-building, on making walking and cycling more attractive, through better maintenance of local roads, better facilities, and slower speeds.

Step 3: Make driving more expensive and less attractive. This can be done in various ways, but fuel tax is not one we'd recommend – too crude and obvious. Governments have to be subtle about this – maybe they should employ Gordon Brown, who has proved himself an expert in stealth taxation. Motorists could and should be charged for the land taken up by parking needs – so workplace and retail centre charging, and even charges for cluttering the streets, should all be on the cards.

Step 4: Use incentives like 'smart' travel to encourage modal shift, and show people how nice our towns could be if liberated from the car.

Step 5: Reduce fuel use by a variety of campaigns, eg.

a) Portray owners of 4x4s and similar gas guzzlers as the selfish, arrogant and uncaring slobs (and, sadly, slobbesses) they really are (the majority of the public already hate them for clogging our narrow streets); and raise their VED accordingly;

b) promote fuel-lean driving techniques such as driving more slowly, gentle acceleration, avoiding a standstill if possible, anticipating the need to brake, reducing speed on hills etc; and find imaginative ways of rewarding those who comply.

Summary:

The overall strategy should, as the document mentions, be a) to reduce the need to travel; b) to prioritise walking and cycling as recommended in the NTS, and to shift modes from car to walking and cycling for short journeys; c) to promote public transport for longer journeys; and d) where cars must be used, to promote economic driving techniques.

A combination of these measures should reduce carbon consumption significantly. The measures would create a variety of jobs and provide employment at a difficult time.

Electric cars carry nearly all the disadvantages of ICE cars and should be a 'last resort', only introduced once the grid has enough renewable capacity to ensure they can be run carbon-free.

The LCS is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to re-assess our lifestyle priorities and determine the quality of life we really prefer.

Peter Hawkins    CTC Scotland

9 June 2010