

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 1 December 2009

Session 3

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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE 27th Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Ian Findlay (Paths for All)
Keith Irving (Living Streets Scotland)
John Lauder (Sustrans)
Elaine Sheerin (Gorbals Healthy Living Network)
Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland)
Chris Thompson (Moray Council)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

ASSISTANT CLERK

Clare O'Neill

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 1 December 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Active Travel Inquiry

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): Good afternoon, and welcome to the 27th meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind everyone present that, as usual, all mobile devices should be switched off. We have received apologies from Alex Johnstone.

Today we have just one item on the agenda: the second oral evidence session for our inquiry into active travel. We will hear from two panels of witnesses. I welcome first Paul Tetlaw, chair of Transform Scotland, and John Lauder, national director for Scotland at Sustrans. Members have a number of questions to put. Before we get started, I invite the witnesses to make some brief opening remarks.

John Lauder (Sustrans): We are pleased to be here and that the committee is holding its inquiry. We look forward to working with you and answering all your questions.

Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland): I echo those remarks. I am delighted that the inquiry is going ahead and would like to express a personal view on the subject that we are considering. Having had a 20-year interest in transport, and having spent three years as chair of Transform Scotland, I have examined and studied the issue a great deal, especially recently.

Active travel ticks almost every policy box that Government would like to see ticked. It is good for the environment, both locally and globally, and good for public health, as it helps to tackle obesity and, therefore, makes employees more productive. It is good for social inclusion, because it makes it much easier for everyone to walk and cycle. On energy security, which will be a major issue for us in the future, it is a low-carbon form of transport. It is good for efficiency in respect of road space and parking space at workplaces. It is also good for local regeneration. We are now all concerned to regenerate our towns, cities and villages. The more people walk and cycle, the more they will go to local centres.

Having thought about active travel, I hope that all of us can buy into it as something that ticks almost every policy box. I hope that that will allow

us to focus our minds on how we can move forward in the area, to implement the measures that we would like to see implemented.

The Convener: Leading on from those remarks and echoing some of the comments that you make in your written evidence, for a number of years there has been recognition of the social, environmental and economic good that can arise from increasing the share of travel for which walking and cycling account. A number of plans and policies at national, local and regional level have indicated support for that aim, but the share has not increased in the way in which it has in some other European countries. Why not?

John Lauder: I agree that there are many good policies in Scotland. We do not need many new policies on active travel—the existing policies are all excellent and well produced, and some set ambitious targets. However, we have identified three big constraints that undermine those good policies.

The first is funding. There is a big gap between the aims and ambitions of many policies and the funding that is available to local authorities to allow them to take the policies forward. There seems to be a gap between the production of a policy or plan and the funding that is available to see it through. Let me give an example. We were happy to be involved in writing the cycling action plan; I was a member both of the group that met to discuss the plan initially and of the editorial board. It is a good plan, but throughout the process the civil service team with which we worked made it clear to us that there would be no funding to take it forward. That slightly undermined people's enthusiasm. It also seemed to me that there was almost an acceptance that although we will have plans and policies, there will not be any funding to take them forward. We had a sense of contributing to a library of excellent policies that would not have the funding to see them through.

Funding is not the only issue, but it is a crucial one. If you are spending less than 1 per cent of your budget to take forward an area in which you have very ambitious policies, it will be hard to deliver on those policies. Funding from central Government is needed.

There is a second constraint that undermines our ability to catch up with other countries, such as Denmark. Thirty years ago, more people cycled in Scotland than in Denmark, but the reverse is now true. Something has happened to make us slip. Thirty years ago, the Danes looked at Copenhagen and other cities and at towns and rural areas and said, "We need to change, and we will change. We will take this forward." They did that through funding and setting meaningful targets. What is important in setting a meaningful target, whether ambitious or modest, is to take a

baseline, so you know where you are and what you can achieve, and to put in place a process to measure progress, or lack of progress, towards the target. We do not have that in Scotland. We do not have comprehensive figures on where we are with cycling and walking, which makes it difficult to set ambitious targets. In addition, the weak side of policy is that local government has not been assessing how we achieve the targets. There is no good, comprehensive set-up in Scotland to measure how many people are walking and cycling.

The third element that undermines all our policies relates to planning, the delivery of new infrastructure and the regeneration of other urban areas. We often design really good facilities. For example, a doctor's surgery in a small rural town might have excellent cycle parking outside and a restricted amount of car parking to encourage people to cycle or walk there, but it might be surrounded by busy streets. Although the planners might have got the design of the facility right, they might not have looked at how people will permeate the development from a five-mile radius, which is a reasonable enough journey on a bike, or from a mile or two away, which is a reasonable distance to walk. You can have a development that is an oasis surrounded by really busy roads. We know from research that people will not ride bikes where there are heavily congested roads on which the traffic is moving quickly. We are just not getting that right.

The best example of that, which I have raised with the committee before, is the excellent scheme, which we fully support, to reopen the rail line between Airdrie and Bathgate. The new stations that will be built along the rail line will be absolutely excellent; they will be models for people to walk and cycle to, but they will not be easily accessed by people who cycle to them. A national cycle network route will go from west to east through the stations, but the bulk of the population who will access them live north and south of them. Nothing new is planned to encourage people to cycle to the stations; they will have to share the road space with the cars that access the stations. The chances are that those roads will become heavily congested. The land, the plans and the principles are there to create traffic-free walking and cycling paths from neighbouring settlements to the stations, which would make those couple of miles a realistic proposition for a cycle journey. That is where the planning fell through.

Our experience of that planning process, in which we were involved from day one because we owned the railway line—we had a path on it, which we were happy to pass to Transport Scotland—was that the issue of how people would access the stations completely fell through all the cracks in the planning process. It was no one body's

responsibility to look at that. Transport Scotland was responsible for the design of the stations, the parking and the facilities in them, but it was not clear who was responsible for access. Both the local authority and the regional transport partnership took the view that they had no funds to create infrastructure for access to the stations. In every area that we looked at, we seemed to come up against a brick wall. We could not make progress. I fear that the railway line will open with heavily congested stations the routes to which are heavily congested, rather than stations that are accessible and permeable to pedestrians and cyclists.

I apologise if I am going on for too long, but a further factor is that, in countries where there has been a marked increase in walking and cycling, there has been political commitment to and leadership of the principle. Somebody has been willing to say, "We really have to do this, and we will do it. If taking it forward means that we have to take unpopular decisions, we will do that."

The three key factors are funding, targeting and planning, and another important factor is political leadership and endorsement.

The Convener: Does Paul Tetlaw have anything to add on why the plans have not led to an increase in modal share?

Paul Tetlaw: John Lauder covered the question well, and I will not cover the same ground.

It is not that we cannot do things well. We can do pedestrianisation well, and we have done so. The centre of Glasgow and the centre of Perth are really attractive places. People go to those places, where there is lots of activity, because they like and enjoy them, which is good for the retailers. We know how to do things well; we are just not looking at best practice in areas such as continental Europe and translating it to here. We are not asking how they did that, or recognising that they had a sustained set of policies over a number of years that shifted them from where they were to where they are now.

I brought along some photographs—I understand from the clerk that they can be circulated to members. I will show just two of them just now. The first shows Copenhagen in the 1950s, and even from where members are sitting, they will be able to see that it was just a car park full of cars. The next photo shows the centre of Copenhagen now, and it is full of people. There is a vast difference. Anyone who has been there or to other northern European countries will know and appreciate that difference. I will circulate the photos. Perhaps we could come back to them later, because there are some other points that I would like to make about them.

The Convener: Some of us will be in Copenhagen in a couple of weeks' time, for obvious reasons. I am sure that we can take a camera as well.

I will ask about cycling first, before we move on to walking. We have heard some arguments that concerns about cyclists' safety and about actual or perceived danger form the biggest barrier that prevents people from cycling. Do you agree? What can be done to address that?

John Lauder: I agree. As I said, I was part of the group that was involved in the cycling action plan, which was well delivered and well thought through. We went to meet the public at a number of roadshows, and we particularly wanted to talk to people who do not ride bikes to find out why they do not cycle. As a regular cyclist, perhaps I do not think along the same lines as someone who does not cycle, but I was surprised by the number of people who said, "I simply will not do it. I won't even contemplate it. The roads are just too busy and the cars move too quickly. I wouldn't feel confident at all. I wouldn't be willing to do it, and I certainly wouldn't let my children do it." That is the overriding factor.

What can be done about that? The straightforward thing is to reduce speed limits. The studies that have been done in England—in Portsmouth, for example—favour reducing the urban speed limit from 30mph to 20mph. However, that cannot be done in isolation. We must consider how we can design roads in the urban realm to encourage drivers to reduce their speed, and we must also enforce parking regulations in areas where there are priority bus lanes. If a priority bus lane is blocked, everyone must get round the blockage. That includes cyclists, who are forced out into the way of faster-moving vehicles. However, the straightforward measure is to reduce speed limits.

14:15

Paul Tetlaw: It is clear from best practice elsewhere that what attracts people most to cycling and walking is dedicated routes for those purposes, so they do not have to share routes with motorised vehicles in hazardous areas. That is important. Where we have provided such routes here, there is ample evidence to show that people use those routes.

The most local example I can think of in Edinburgh is the canal towpath from the centre out to the Heriot-Watt University site at Riccarton. That is a victim of its own success—it is so well used by walkers and cyclists that the two groups are almost in conflict. When we provide such routes, people flock to and use them. We need to focus on dedicated safe routes.

I cycle only occasionally; I walk around the city centre. One danger is that some of the people who give evidence to the committee will be dyed-in-the-wool, hardened cyclists who cycle in any conditions and therefore are not as aware as others are of the dangers that other people perceive.

The Convener: We are certainly aware of the need to take evidence from people who do not walk or cycle or who feel that they need a little more encouragement.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): I have a quick question about dedicated cycle paths and walkways. You gave the example of the towpath in Edinburgh; the Water of Leith walkway is another example. The anecdotal evidence is that lone women do not use those paths as much, because of safety issues. Dedicated routes encourage people to walk or cycle, but is safety from crime an issue when using those routes? Do men use the routes more than women? I know from constituency cases and from walking groups in the Water of Leith area that people are frightened to use the walkway because of perceived—but not necessarily actual—danger.

John Lauder: I agree that a strong perception is that paths can be unsafe at night. Sustrans is responsible for a number of miles of traffic-free paths in Scotland and is the body behind the national cycle networks, so we are in a sense responsible for starting the creation of traffic-free paths, particularly in quiet areas—we often build them on disused railway lines.

We have found that a tipping point exists. If use is encouraged and built up such that many people use a path, the path becomes reliable and safe. Several years ago—when I joined Sustrans—we conducted a study of a path that connects to the Water of Leith path, running between St Mark's path and Steadfastgate. For not a lot of money, we doubled the use of the route and reduced antisocial behaviour to a minimum, because people were observed.

The issue comes down to the right design. It is interesting that Lothian and Borders Police and Strathclyde Police have the secured by design award and have architectural liaison officers who work closely with developers. The police's view is that traffic-free paths are not dangerous in themselves, provided that sightlines are good, that the paths are well maintained and that graffiti is removed and damaged lighting replaced quickly by whoever is responsible for them.

Use should be encouraged through soft measures and maintained by hard measures, such as clamping down on graffiti and other antisocial behaviour, so that the path becomes reliable and relied on.

Paul Tetlaw: It is clear that there is safety in numbers. The more people use a walking or cycling path, the safer they feel, because more people are around. I gave the example of the canal towpath. That route was easy to establish, because the towpath was there and needed just a bit of improvement and tarmac.

John Lauder referred to converting disused railway lines into cycle paths. Those are the easy ones: they take no effort to do, but they are a success. I am sure that it is right that some people are nervous of using towpaths—females, for example. My experience of the canal towpath, which I use a lot, is that many females use it, both for walking and cycling. Clearly, all females do not feel that same sense of risk.

We have to move on from the easy ones to the more difficult ones—those that require the sharing of road space. At the moment, the road space in our cities is almost entirely given over to motorised vehicles. I have another photograph—I will circulate them all later—of Copenhagen that shows clearly a dedicated cycle lane that is quite separate from the road and which is extremely well used. One striking fact is that the cyclists are predominantly female; another is that everyone is dressed in everyday clothes. The picture was taken in summer; people are dressed in summer clothes. I also have a photograph of people cycling in Bruges in winter, dressed in everyday winter clothes. In Scotland, cyclists look like Lycra-clad warriors; they are dressed as if to do battle on the streets. People seem to feel that they have to dress and behave like that. The photograph shows cycling as an everyday activity; people are dressed accordingly.

The Convener: Safety as a barrier to cycling may also apply to walking. Paul Tetlaw said that we do pedestrianisation better than we do cycling infrastructure. Do we pedestrianise areas well so that people spend more time walking around shopping precincts or because we want to move them between places?

Paul Tetlaw: We are talking about connectivity—the routes that people use to get to the pleasant pedestrianised areas. I have taken photographs on the edge of Glasgow and of Perth, for example, to illustrate that the environment in Scotland is completely different from that on the edge of Copenhagen. In the main, we do not have the pleasant cycling routes into our towns and cities that people in Denmark have. That said, there are some; we are starting to do better.

For example, well-signed walking routes are beginning to show not only distances but the time that it takes to walk somewhere. If someone sees that a route is 1 mile long, they do not always know how long it will take them to walk it—they think that a mile is a long way. I have seen new

signs—some in Britain and some abroad—that say that the route will take 5 minutes, 10 minutes or 15 minutes. Those signs are helpful and go well with good-quality walking routes.

John Lauder: Paul Tetlaw is right that we design pedestrian areas very well. In working with Heriot-Watt University, over the past year or so Sustrans has begun to learn about the lack of training for transport planners in designing and redesigning cycling routes. That gap in the curriculum is interesting. By comparison, we seem to do pedestrianisation well.

Other groups are more knowledgeable than we are about the barriers to walking, but the obvious barriers are to do with the condition of footways and whether footways are in place. For example, if a group of villages is not connected by a footway, there is an immediate disincentive to walking. The villages might be only a quarter of a mile apart, yet there might be no footway to link them, or the footway might be overgrown and not well maintained.

I return to what was said earlier about traffic-free paths. Much of what we are discussing is easy to do. We are talking about, for example, removing graffiti and ensuring that hedges are cut back and lights work.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): What steps can the Scottish Government, local authorities and other bodies take to increase quickly the modal share of walking and cycling across Scotland?

John Lauder: That is an interesting question; I hesitate to answer it as I do not want us to see the problem as one that can be solved by a quick hit, if you like, although I appreciate the spirit in which it was asked. The current situation is complex; it has taken us 30-odd years to get into the state that we are in today. In the past, we thought that we could solve things quickly by using splurges of money to build cycle lanes, for example, but some of those lanes are not very good—they go nowhere and no one uses them.

Although there are some quick hits, it depends on what you mean by quick and the timescale that you imagine. I would not recommend a huge increase in money straight away, because that would not work. In our submission, we try to argue that money alone will not get more people living an active lifestyle and walking or cycling more. Money is one element, but other elements are planning, targeting and leadership.

That is why our submission recommends that you consider creating a national active travel plan that would roll up the cycling action plan for Scotland, which is an excellent piece of work, with a walking strategy and plan, which do not exist at the moment. That national active travel plan could comfortably be written in 2010—the cycling action

plan was written in such a timescale—with a view to being funded in the next spending review period. However, such a plan would work only if there was political leadership to take it on and enthusiasm for it at all levels—not only in central Government or here at Holyrood but in all local authorities and in some of the major transport generators in Scotland, such as universities and the health service, which generate short trips.

That would be a quick hit, although I appreciate that it is about a year away. It would be a really good achievement to produce such a plan and set meaningful targets with solid baselines of evidence—which we could produce in that timescale—leading to implementation over three years. The national active travel plan could state where we are now and indicate that we were going to move forward. It could state that we accept and will aim to hit the target in the cycling action plan and set out how we will do that through a fully co-ordinated approach.

That is my main recommendation for a quick hit. A second recommendation is to give serious consideration to reducing the 30mph speed limit to 20mph. That would not be a quick hit because it would involve at least two years of consultation to get to that position—a consultation on limits on rural minor roads is out at the moment and is due to report, I think, in 2011. It would not be an immediate hit, but it is the type of ambitious target that could set a strong marker. There is a good, solid baseline of evidence that that would be an achievable target and that it would provide a good benefit.

Paul Tetlaw: I echo what John Lauder says: there is no quick, magic solution. We are where we are because of 50 years of policies that have taken us in a different direction. However, there is always a turning point with any set of policies and legislation, and I ardently hope that the committee's inquiry and the evidence that it receives represent that turning point.

I am genuinely puzzled about why there has not been more enthusiasm for changing the situation earlier, because such change would tick many policy boxes. Many areas of society would benefit. Indeed, we would all benefit economically because many of the issues involved, such as poor health and congestion, have big economic costs.

The Government and Parliament have passed climate change legislation that is admired around the world, so I hope that the inquiry is a turning point and that we will be able to grasp the wider benefits of active travel policies and begin to move in a different direction. Many of the strategies that John Lauder outlined could shape national strategic policies to take local and national Government in that different direction.

14:30

Cathy Peattie: You talked about the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. In this committee in particular, we are proud of that act, but one of the challenges for it—and in creating a culture of cycling and walking—is to convince people that it is a good idea. We can write reports for ever, but it is difficult to see how we will move forward unless we win people's hearts and minds.

I am interested to know how you think that we can do that. I was pleased to hear Paul Tetlaw say that it should not be a question of fashion or the garments that folk wear to cycle. At last week's meeting, we heard that women do not cycle because they do not have fashionable outfits to wear, which appalled me, although I kept quiet about it. It was good to hear that in Copenhagen people just get on a bike. How do we win people's hearts and minds? How do we encourage them to think, "Hey, this is an option—I'm going to use my bike or walk"?

Paul Tetlaw: My understanding is that more people own bikes than cars—there are more bikes than there are cars. We have to ask why, if all those people own all those bikes, we do not see them being used all the time. That suggests to me that there is a pent-up will to use them to cycle more. Most of us walk for at least some part of every journey that we make, so we are familiar with that, but we could walk more and further with better routes.

I do not believe that there is a huge hearts-and-minds battle to be won. It is more a question of developing a set of policies and designing our communities in ways that free up the pent-up desire to walk and cycle. To return to the examples that were given earlier, I think that when we provide high-quality facilities people just go and use them.

Cathy Peattie: Does the need for good facilities come before the need to convince people, or is it a chicken-and-egg situation?

Paul Tetlaw: It is a bit of each, but it is important that we have a set of strategies and policies to put the facilities in place. A lot of research is currently being carried out to find the best cost benefit ratio in transport investment. The Government has carried out some research and found that the best benefit for each pound that is spent comes from smarter choices, which involve walking, cycling, better advice on public transport and better integration.

There is an important message that we need to get over to people, but in some cases we almost have to start again and teach people how to do things such as catch a bus, explaining to them, "That is a bus stop, that is a timetable, and the bus

takes you from here to there.” Sadly, an element of hand holding is necessary in our society today.

An element of education and help is needed, but there is a willing public out there who will quite easily receive the messages about active travel. If they are given the right facilities, they will use them readily.

John Lauder: Many bodies in Scotland carry out projects that relate to the question that you asked of how we encourage people to walk and cycle more. The ratio is 70:30 in favour of soft measures, which involve engaging with people rather than just building things.

One could argue that we already have an excellent cycling network but that it is clogged with cars that travel too quickly and are sometimes driven too aggressively. We have a good infrastructure, and many bodies are currently demonstrating good policies that involve working with people and engaging with communities. The fancy phrase is personalised travel planning, but, as Paul Tetlaw rightly said, the answers involve engaging with people and communities, looking at facilities and considering what people would like.

The one area in which we could make a big difference in encouraging people to walk and particularly to cycle more is schools. The levels of those activities are so low that there is tremendous capacity for growth. I know that the committee is talking to a school travel co-ordinator later, so I will not go on at length about the issue, but I think that there is tremendous capacity to encourage youngsters in schools. There is a fantastic appetite among children at primary and secondary school to cycle. They really want to do that, and they admire the people who compete at the Olympics or go mountain biking. It is cool to be on a bike such as a BMX: kids want to be doing that. Barriers can be broken down, and we have a lot of evidence to show how that can be done.

I feel an element of frustration about piloting programmes. We are good at piloting programmes, but we must stop piloting them at some point, decide which programmes make a real difference and implement the successful ones. We have good baseline evidence through projects and can see the results. There comes a point at which we have to break our culture of piloting programmes. For example, I think that the schools programme has been piloted to death. We should just take the programme and make it go, because we could have fantastic figures.

Each year, Sustrans runs what we call the hands-up survey. All classes of children in all schools are asked on one day in September how they travelled to school that day, and the children just put their hand up for one option to answer the question. The Government has accepted that as a

solid evidence base, we are being given funding on that basis, and it has become a measure that the Government will apply.

The survey shows that there is tremendous enthusiasm for cycling and walking to school. There are encouraging figures in all areas, but particularly rural ones, where children have a real appetite to get to school on their own. My feeling is that the schools programme is solid and needs to be taken forward. Funding could be put into what is a well-established programme to take it forward.

Cathy Peattie: Can we learn any lessons from elsewhere in the world to increase our levels of cycling and walking?

Paul Tetlaw: Yes. I refer to the examples that I gave before. Northern European countries are probably the best comparators for us because their climate is similar to ours and we can identify ourselves well with them. Denmark is a good example. A third of people in Copenhagen cycle to work every day, although the Danes are not satisfied with that and want to make it half the people. I have a photograph here of traffic in Copenhagen in the 1950s, which shows the committee that changes can be made.

Of other northern European countries, I have referred to Bruges in Belgium. I was there in winter and saw people just going about their everyday activities by bike. I saw hundreds and probably thousands of bikes parked at the railway station, because people had cycled there.

Everybody uses Holland as another good example, but we can look to Switzerland, too. I think that I am correct in saying that the modal share for cycling in Switzerland is 10 per cent, even though, as we can all understand, it is a mountainous country. I was going to say that, clearly, people there do not cycle up mountainsides, but some of the sporting cyclists do appear to do that for exercise. Generally, though, cycling is done in communities in the valleys just to access local facilities and shops, and there are networks of cycle paths that allow people to do that. There are countries all around Europe that we can look to as examples.

John Lauder: Paul Tetlaw is right to point out the northern European countries, but there has also been major growth in some American cities—for example, Portland. There is a solid car culture in the US, but there is now also a strong cycling culture. That has been encouraged through good planning and leadership—all the elements that we have listed in our written submission. It will take time in Scotland to get to the level of sophistication that now exists in northern Europe, particularly in transport planning. Whole settlements there are now built around public transport first, with walking and cycling integrated in any new development.

Transport planners have redesigned cities by doing cheap things such as quartering a city so that it is difficult to drive from one quarter to the next but easy to cycle to it. It is easy to make new developments and towns permeable.

I am sure that, when committee members go on their trip, they will want to meet transport planners to see what they do and see how sophisticated an approach they now have, from which we can definitely learn.

Cathy Peattie: Will you briefly give us your opinion of the cycling action plan for Scotland? What could be done to improve it? I was concerned to hear from John Lauder that there is no money to back it up.

John Lauder: It is a good plan. I was pleased to be asked to be involved in it, and I was happy to give a fair amount of time to it. The target in it is ambitious but could be met.

As I said, the caveat is that there is no money for the plan. While we were writing the plan, it was always made clear to us—which was good—that there would be no new money to deliver whatever we came up with: we might produce an excellent plan, which contained good targets, but there would be no new money to take it forward. I am sad that, although everyone bought into the idea, gave their time and effort so willingly and produced a good plan, many people will regard the plan as just another document that will sit on a shelf gathering dust and not deliver the target that it set out to deliver. That is a real disappointment.

Paul Tetlaw: We must address the issue of money. There needs to be a significant change in funding for cycling and walking. We appreciate that we are in difficult economic times, which will not get easier in the immediate future, but we therefore need to divert funds from unsustainable transport initiatives to sustainable transport initiatives.

I do not think that it is too ambitious to propose that 10 per cent of the transport budget should be spent on active travel modes—currently we spend about 1 per cent. If we are to have a chance of reaping the benefits that come from active travel, which include meeting the climate change targets and making ourselves less dependent on oil, which is a great risk for us, we need to fund active travel seriously. We can do that only by diverting funds from unsustainable transport modes into active travel.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Mr Lauder, will you provide information on the active travel consortium projects? In particular, will you talk about the project at the University of Edinburgh?

John Lauder: I am happy to do so. We have been working with the University of Edinburgh and the University of Stirling for the past year, through the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges. We have worked with both universities, usually through their estates departments, to assess how students and staff travel to campus and between campuses—at Stirling there is just one campus, whereas there are various campuses in Edinburgh—and to consider what measures we can build in to encourage people to travel actively.

The approach has worked well in Stirling but has been less successful in Edinburgh. If campuses are spread over a city, it is much more difficult to create modal shift in how people travel. That has been easier to do in Stirling, where everyone is on a single campus. For example, we introduced cycle parking and took away car parking—it is possible to park 12 bikes in one car parking space. We found that there was no difficulty with that approach and that people bought into the idea. We trained staff, so that they could train other people and build their confidence when they cycle. We produced maps and introduced other soft measures to inform people about their options for travelling actively.

Rob Gibson: What percentage of the people who might travel actively did you reach?

John Lauder: I do not have accurate figures with me.

Rob Gibson: You said that the approach was more successful in Stirling than it was in Edinburgh, for obvious reasons. How successful was it? How many people are travelling around the campus on bicycles?

14:45

John Lauder: I do not have an accurate figure for that with me, but I would be happy to give you it. The project is one of a wide range that we are pursuing. The take-up will be slow in the beginning, but it will grow. The idea was that Sustrans would not be at Stirling for a long time but would create a culture within the campus to take things forward. I am sorry that I do not have the figure to hand—I will e-mail it to you as soon as I get back to my office.

Rob Gibson: That would be helpful. My follow-up question is about the replication of the scheme elsewhere. I presume that it is easy to get a body such as a university or a college to become involved. Can such a scheme be replicated elsewhere?

John Lauder: I am almost absolutely sure that it can be replicated. Within the university sector, there is an appetite to work with us. We plan to launch a cycle parking project shortly, which will

run to the end of the financial year. The communities that we will work with are universities and national health service boards; both types of organisation create a lot of short trips. We have not worked with them before, but the enthusiasm that we are encountering is really good. I assure you that we will have figures for all the work that we do and that I will be able to report them to you.

Rob Gibson: Let me ask you a bit more about your school travel programme. Have any changes in school travel choices arisen from the scheme? How can the lessons that have been learned from the scheme be applied elsewhere in Scotland?

John Lauder: In our experience, the take-up is almost always good. The best figures for cycling to school are in the Highland region, where 10 per cent of children cycle to school. The figures are also good in Moray and East Lothian. We have found that, where the bulk of our approach is in engaging through soft measures with the school community—talking to teachers, pupils, the local authority and, crucially, the pupils' parents—and then establishing the infrastructure that is required, it is nearly always successful and results in a high level of take-up. In Dunbar, for example, we are almost struggling to provide the cycle parking that the schools need because so many kids are cycling to school from the new estates.

Without a doubt, such projects can be replicated through the school travel co-ordinator network, which is the crucial conduit into the schools. Not all local authorities have school travel co-ordinators—some have active schools co-ordinators. They do an excellent job, and the best way for Sustrans to work with schools is through those people, as they work at a local level and with local authorities. It requires the comprehensive approach that we have outlined before, and engagement is the crucial element of that.

Rob Gibson: Once again, you have not given us any figures in terms of the 10 per cent. It strikes me that children who get bussed a long distance would not use their bicycles to get to school. In the Highland region, as everywhere else, it is more likely that children will use their bicycles if they live within a mile or so of their school. You cite good examples in Highland and Moray. Are there disadvantages in other parts of the country that make it more difficult for children to cycle to school? You are not going to tell me that roads elsewhere are busier than some of the roads around Inverness.

John Lauder: No, I am not. The examples that I gave—Highland, Moray and East Lothian—happen to have really good school travel co-ordinators. That might well be the reason for their success, and I believe that you will meet the school travel co-ordinator for Moray later. We

cannot make that assessment, but you have raised an interesting point, which we will look into. Having an active schools travel co-ordinator—particularly one who is funded—might produce the effect.

I am not sure why fewer children cycle to school in urban areas. It may well be that there are alternatives such as bus travel. Buses may be required for longer trips in rural areas, particularly to secondary school, but there may be more buses in urban areas for short trips.

Rob Gibson: So we will get a little more information from you on that.

John Lauder: Yes. I am happy to provide that.

Rob Gibson: Sustrans has carried out individualised travel planning, through its travelsmart programme. Can you provide details of the scheme as applied in Scotland and outline how successful it has been in achieving modal shift?

John Lauder: We have been able to fund one programme in Inverness, which produced a 10 per cent increase in walking and cycling in the area in 2007.

Travelsmart is a personalised travel planning programme that works through engagement with people. We identify a geographical area in which we would like to run the programme and send a mailshot to every household to ask people whether they want to participate in the scheme. If they do, there is a reward for them when they respond, and they receive a detailed information pack. If at that stage they wish to continue, the programme ramps up and someone from travelsmart who is based locally visits them to chat about active travel plans and issues such as bike maintenance. If households do not wish to participate in the programme, they receive a mailing that contains information about local bus timetables and walking and cycling routes, on a map that is made to a local scale. In addition, a limited number of hard measures are implemented, such as new signing and upgrades to paths.

Rob Gibson: Where in Inverness was the programme run?

John Lauder: It was based around primary schools in the east of Inverness, one of which was in Culloden. I cannot recall the names of all the suburbs that were involved, but I would be happy to provide them.

Rob Gibson: I wanted to establish whether the programme was run in a fairly flat area or in a hilly area. It is important to get good examples to help you along, but it would be a good idea to apply them in areas where there is physical disadvantage.

John Lauder: We would be happy to roll out the travelsmart programme. The Government has made it clear that we cannot use Scottish Government money to run the programme as that might be seen as uncompetitive, given that other bodies have personalised travel planning programmes in place. We would be happy to run more schemes, and we are tendering for one in Dumfries, which is again a largely flat town. However, we have run schemes in places in England, such as Exeter, that are not flat, and I could provide the committee with figures for them.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): Your written evidence highlights the importance of linking transport and development planning, to provide greater opportunities for active travel for the whole or even parts of journeys. You have already spoken in detail on the issue, but it would be useful for us to hear a little more about it. Have you identified any changes to planning guidance that need to be made to strengthen local authorities' ability to link transport and development planning?

John Lauder: I am not sure that there needs to be a major change to planning guidance. The guidance needs to be applied, but often it is not. A clear hierarchy that puts the pedestrian at the top of a pyramid is set out in travel planning guidance. As I have said, often such guidance is applied within a development but we fail to look beyond that, at how people might travel to the development. The point is especially relevant to developments such as shopping centres, recreational facilities, hospitals, surgeries and health practices, which people use from a local area. I do not want to repeat what I have said. The guidance is in place, but we need it to be applied much more comprehensively.

Alison McInnes: I would like to explore the issue. The legal process tends to restrict planning agreements and conditions that can be attached to planning permission to the development itself. It is hard to have a web approach that would allow us to use the funds from new developments to support transport more widely. How could such developments be linked to improvements to a town's existing infrastructure?

John Lauder: In continental Europe, particularly northern European cities, people take a whole-town approach but, in Scotland, we do not carry out active travel surveys of entire towns. A short while ago, Sustrans introduced a similar and really good scheme in Falkirk, which is one of the smarter choices, smarter places towns, Larbert and Stenhousemuir. The project, which was led by a transport planner on our staff, was the first one of its kind that we had undertaken and, indeed, was the first time that a local authority had considered a town in its entirety, not only where

people walk and cycle to but where they would like to walk and cycle to. Such surveys might well have a strong influence on planning guidance and the siting of developments; after all, if we site major developments on the outskirts of towns, we will only encourage car travel, but siting them in town or urban centres will encourage more active travel.

Paul Tetlaw: It is clear that we have to re-engineer our communities. As John Lauder pointed out, we might have lots of cycle paths but, at the moment, they are just full of cars. I am not sure whether it comes from his time as Prime Minister or as Chancellor of the Exchequer, but Gordon Brown once proposed a strategy for new sustainable towns and communities in England. However, that approach might be on the wane because, as others have pointed out, we already have potential sustainable communities—and they are called Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and so on. We have just engineered them wrongly over the past 30 or 40 years.

As well as having the right planning guidance in place for new-build communities, we have to think about how we re-engineer the rest of the community around that to make it much easier for people to travel in different ways. We need to give people back the choice that, over the past generation or more, has been taken away from them. At some point, we will have to impose draconian measures because of climate change, energy security or some other reason, but if people have not been given a choice of travel options, they will not take kindly to such steps.

We pride ourselves on belonging to a community of choice. We like to think that, when it comes to mobile phones, food or whatever, everything is about choice. However, we have taken travel choices away from people and it is time that we gave them back.

Alison McInnes: In your written evidence and again this afternoon, you have called for 10 per cent of the transport budget to be allocated to active travel measures by, I think, the end of the next spending review period. Will you say more about that proposal and outline how that 10 per cent should be spent? Do you think, for example, that certain types of journeys should be prioritised?

Paul Tetlaw: At the moment, two thirds of all transport trips are less than 5 miles in length and 40 per cent are less than 2 miles. It is clear that most of those trips would be ideal for walking or cycling; indeed, any active person can walk 1 or 2 miles, and it would be good for their health. Perhaps only keener walkers will want to walk 5 miles, so such journeys might be better for cycling.

Earlier, we talked about whole-town or whole-community surveys as a means of re-engineering

communities. Perhaps that is a good way of approaching this issue; we should look at where walking and cycling routes could be improved and use that analysis to identify where funding should be allocated. The 10 per cent figure is actually quite modest. At the moment, we achieve a 1 per cent modal share with 1 per cent funding and I think that, with 10 per cent of the transport budget, we would achieve much more than a 10 per cent modal share. Surely that is where we want to go. Instead of only doing half as well as other European countries—which, I should add, are aiming to get better—we should seek to be where they are now.

John Lauder: I echo what Paul Tetlaw said. The distances that we should be focusing on are 5 miles and under for cycle trips and 2 miles and under for walking. If we were to reach a position in which 10 per cent of the transport budget was dedicated to active travel, we would have to adopt a comprehensive approach to ensure that we delivered that to best effect.

15:00

The Convener: I have a brief follow-up question. If 10 per cent of the transport budget were spent on active modes of travel, that would represent a substantial increase on what is being spent on them at the moment. Who should spend that money—central Government, local government, the regional transport partnerships or Transport Scotland?

John Lauder: The advice of the Association of Directors of Public Health is that 10 per cent of all transport budgets should be spent on active travel.

The Convener: At which level should that money be spent? If that amount of money is allocated to active travel, who should spend it?

John Lauder: My view is that the sustainable transport team in central Government is best placed to manage or plan the spending of central Government's share. In the NHS and the universities, bodies are coming together that are beginning to get experience of spending active travel funding. In local authorities, the transport department has traditionally spent active travel moneys, but I strongly urge that school travel co-ordinators receive a major increase in their budgets.

The Convener: Is there any prospect of cycling getting a 10 per cent modal share if spending on active travel is not in that ball park?

John Lauder: It would be extremely difficult to achieve that without there being a major spike in the cost of petrol that meant that people simply could not drive and had to cycle. We want to take people with us on the journey, rather than have an

economic crisis that results in that change happening.

Paul Tetlaw: You mentioned Transport Scotland, which we meet regularly. At the time of the strategic transport projects review and the preparation for that, we made the point that “strategic” ought not to mean just big projects, which is the view that Transport Scotland seems to take of its role and remit. Perhaps that is the organisation's written role and remit—I am not entirely clear—but it seems to me that “strategic” ought to mean transport measures that are of national importance throughout Scotland. We are all arguing for a strategic approach to be taken to active travel—walking and cycling. If Transport Scotland is to continue in existence in the long term—I am not wise to whether that will or will not be the case—an important part of its remit should be to take a strategic approach across all transport modes.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: You have each mentioned the need for political leadership to ensure that we can achieve the modal shift that we are all looking for. Who should provide that leadership? Should that be done at a national level, a local level or a community level? Where would be the best place for that?

John Lauder: Senior politicians definitely have a role to play in making progress on that. Local politicians in local communities, too, need to convey the message that we have tried to convey about the benefits of active travel. If we are to meet our climate change targets and to prepare for peak oil and other issues, this is the right time to make the move to active travel.

Among the best role models are the one or two people one often finds in organisations who are the champions of walking and cycling. There are schemes such as the cycle-friendly employer award, which is given to employers who put in infrastructure and planning to encourage people to walk and cycle. Our experience is that when there is enthusiasm and people who are willing to lead, others will definitely follow.

Paul Tetlaw: I strongly believe that the process should start at national level—a lead should be provided at national level by the Parliament. The Parliament gave a clear lead by introducing the ban on smoking in public places and was widely admired for doing so. The benefits of that can now be seen. The Parliament also gave a clear lead by passing the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, so it should set the tone at national level.

As I said in my introductory remarks, it seems to me that all political parties could agree on the benefits of this area, because it ticks so many boxes. We could have a cross-party lead at a national level on the issue, and it could be made

clear to others in society that this is where we are going as a country. Local government could have arrangements with national Government as to its priorities in that respect. I think that the private sector will understand that and embrace it, if it understands that that is the tone that is being set and the direction in which we are going. However, the leadership must come from a national level.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We discussed a national active travel plan earlier. What would make that different from the plethora of other travel plans that we have discussed?

John Lauder: What would make such a plan different would be its enthusiastic adoption by politicians in the Parliament and their leadership on it. Without that, it would be just another plan. It could not exist as a national active travel plan if it did not bring in walking, have funding, address the planning issues and set meaningful targets. That would make it different. To take all that forward requires dynamism and enthusiasm. We envisage the plan having a champion or champions here in Holyrood who will say that it is so important that they are raising it above party politics and will commit to taking it forward.

Paul Tetlaw is right that, in most other northern European countries with minority Governments, investment in active travel continues. It is seen as something that everyone must be committed to doing. Such commitment would make the plan here different; without it, it would not be a national plan. It would be the cycling action plan and a walking strategy. What would make it different would be a level of enthusiasm and vigour to take it forward and deliver it.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: You have each mentioned the importance of climate change and the role that cycling and walking can play in achieving our climate change targets. However, we have heard from other witnesses that that aspect does not play much of a role in an individual's travel choices. Should we seek to change that, or should we accept it and try to influence people with messages that do work, such as the health message that you mentioned?

John Lauder: That is an interesting question. Increasingly, people are becoming more concerned about climate change, but the vast majority of the public are not engaged with or aware of it. You are right that it will play less of a part. What came out of the cycling action plan was that health is the number 1 thing that people are anxious about. They are anxious about their health and their children's health. They want to be more active and they know that cycling is an easy way for them to do that. Our experience is that we should always work with the willing, so we should go with the messages that people are enthusiastic about.

I think, though, that climate change will increasingly come in as a message and that people will become more interested in it and want to see how it can be combated.

Paul Tetlaw: People's desire to travel more actively predates climate change. If we look to Europe, they redesigned their cities to allow people to do that before we were even talking about climate change, just because it was good for their health, for the local community and for the quality of life. I agree with John Lauder that we can push other buttons to engage people before we push the climate change one. However, climate change will not go away. The legislation is in place in Scotland and it will follow around the world. People will become more engaged with making the necessary changes to their lifestyles.

The Convener: Thank you. That ends the questions that members have for you. Do you want to make any final comments on issues that have not been touched on?

John Lauder: The only thing that I have not touched on is quality of life. What quality of life do we want in our settlements and for individuals? Active transport in Scotland has a big role to play in that respect. One of the economic measurements that Copenhagen applies to its city centre is the availability of seats outside coffee shops and cafes. It is not the only measurement, but it is a great one for Copenhagen. Copenhagen is, I think, the world's most desirable city to live in and has such a high quality of life because it has given over much of its city centre to walking and cycling, and it has made itself permeable. Quality of life could be one of the key issues in taking forward active travel.

The Convener: Thank you. Do you have anything to add?

Paul Tetlaw: No. I think that I have had the chance to say everything that I wanted to say.

The Convener: Many thanks for your answers. We will suspend briefly to allow the changeover of witnesses.

15:10

Meeting suspended.

15:14

On resuming—

The Convener: If everyone settles down, we will resume item 1 on our agenda, which is evidence on the active travel inquiry.

I welcome our second panel of witnesses. We are joined by Keith Irving, the manager of Living Streets Scotland; Ian Findlay, chief officer at Paths

for All; Chris Thompson, travel co-ordinator for Moray Council; and Elaine Sheerin, the south-east walking programme co-ordinator for the Gorbals healthy living network.

Do you have any brief opening remarks to make before we begin questions?

Ian Findlay (Paths for All): Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank you for inviting Paths for All to the inquiry, and say how much we welcome it. Paths for All has been involved in walking and cycling development for more than 15 years, and it is extremely encouraging that there is a committee inquiry on the subject. It is a huge opportunity, so we thank you.

Keith Irving (Living Streets Scotland): Thank you for having us. Living Streets wants to see safe, attractive and enjoyable streets where people want to walk. I do not think that anyone would necessarily disagree with that aim. As I was walking down to the Parliament, I saw the things that people see every day: cyclists, buses and lots of cars going past, but a lot of people were walking. The inquiry is a good opportunity to see how we can increase the numbers of people who walk in particular.

Chris Thompson (Moray Council): Thank you for the opportunity to come along from the grass roots of school travel. I did not have time to make a submission beforehand, but if members feel that it is necessary to have a bit of background on the school travel programme in Scotland, I am happy to go into it. Would you welcome that?

The Convener: You are welcome to provide further written evidence after the meeting.

Chris Thompson: Okay. I just have a few brief notes if you want me to share them with the committee.

The Convener: There will be some specific questions on school travel.

Chris Thompson: The information might come out in the round, then.

Elaine Sheerin (Gorbals Healthy Living Network): Hello, from one green champion to another, Patrick. British Airways says "It's not the destination, it's the journey." Members should think about that as a concept. I came a long way, you know, and I walked all the way.

The Gorbals healthy living network started as a pilot project on walking in the Gorbals. Members know how the Gorbals was in days gone by, but it has changed a lot and the buildings have definitely improved, as have the walkways. We started a walking programme and got local people, the police and some workers involved in it. The idea was that we would have five colour-coded routes through the Gorbals. We got the walks all timed

and worked out the distances, and we handed out maps to people so that they could follow the routes. We also put up signs so that people could follow the routes themselves without being led. The walks were risk assessed and a street audit was done as well, so the area could be guaranteed safe. We found that thermoplastic signage on the ground created a lot of interest. It is a marketing tool. People ask, "What is that?" and are quite intrigued. They want to be involved in the walking programme because they can see the stuff.

My thinking is from the ground up, and asks, "What is a walk?" People do not know what a walk entails. It is when people go out and meet at a designated point and, as a group, go on a walk that might last 30 minutes to an hour. We would be mostly talking as opposed to walking, and we would be looking at the environment and local history and all the other different things around us. In the Gorbals there is a lot of artwork as well, so there are a lot of things to see and do and talk about. We meet and make friends, and people go along because someone else is there. They like to go along and catch up with people.

There is also a safety aspect. We are out there claiming our own streets. We might be walking about when we recognise some kids who are hanging about. People say, "That's thae kids," but we can say, "No—that's so-and-so," and give them a wave, so it is a good way of creating a kind of community spirit.

The Convener: Members will have more detailed questions for you as we go along. Is that all right?

Elaine Sheerin: That is fine.

The Convener: I will open up with a general question for the panel. We have heard that physical and cultural aspects can serve as barriers to people choosing to walk and cycle for short journeys, or indeed for longer ones. Does the panel have specific views on what the main cultural and physical barriers are to walking and cycling?

Chris Thompson: One of the barriers that we identified fairly early on was the lack of role models, in school travel especially; children want to see that what they are doing is mainstream and is not going to put them on the fringes of society. I said that guardedly, but if we compare earlier approaches to cycling—in particular, the approach on the continent, where cycling is mainstreamed and cyclists wear ordinary clothes—with what happens here, it is clear that our approach is very different.

In the context of modelling best practice, we focused on individuals and got them to be exemplars, to show people how it is done. It might

not sound like rocket science, but getting good role models in schools is crucial. For example, there is a headmaster who walks a couple of miles to school, which has a crucial impact on the students, because they do not perceive that there is a hierarchy of transport. That is one idea for the committee.

Ian Findlay: Members are right to identify physical and cultural barriers to active travel. Both sorts of barrier exist, but we think that the cultural barriers are greater than the physical ones. The physical environment could always be made better but, as John Lauder said, it is not too bad—it is not sufficiently bad to account for the small modal share that walking and cycling have. Cultural barriers are the main challenge. As Paul Tetlaw said, it is about trying to find a citizen-led approach, whereby ordinary people start to make everyday journeys on foot and by bike. We need to find the triggers that will bring about such citizen-led cultural change. That is the real challenge for the active travel agenda.

Keith Irving: Cultural barriers are important, but at different stages of our lives the physical barriers become more important. If we are talking about walking and cycling to school, the physical barrier might be a busy street that a parent will not let their child walk along or cross. Towards the end of our lives, when walking becomes more of a challenge, simple things such as pavement maintenance make crucial differences. We need to normalise active travel in the culture, so that walking and cycling are not seen as marginal choices, but we also need to remember that walking can be difficult and that there are physical challenges that we need to address, particularly for people who have mobility problems.

Elaine Sheerin: We came across a cultural barrier when women in east Pollokshields told us that they wanted a women-only group. I said, "That's fine; then we'll have to set up a men-only group and a mixed group, to keep everyone happy." That is what we planned to do.

The Convener: Are the cultural barriers more important than the physical ones?

Elaine Sheerin: Yes, they are in east Pollokshields, because the area is lovely to walk in. The pavements are wide and the area is nice, but cultural barriers are the drawback.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Living Streets and Paths for All highlighted the need for strong leadership to drive forward the active travel agenda. Who should provide that leadership? Why has there not been such leadership in the past?

Ian Findlay: There can be leadership at various levels, but in this context what is crucial is political leadership and political will among public sector

doers—for want of a better word. I am thinking about people in the public sector who are champions of active travel and want to lead the agenda. The third sector also has a role in assisting with leadership, but the key factor is political leadership at national Government and local government levels.

Keith Irving: I agree with Ian Findlay and will take what he said a step further. There is no point in committee members leading by example and walking two miles to Parliament every day if key local decision makers including councillors and heads of transport do not agree with the approach. There is a massive role for local government. It is all very well for a national policy to come out—I am sure that we will come on to discuss that—but it needs buy-in and leadership at local level. We need both those things.

On why that has not happened in the past, society has moved into a car-dominated era during the past two generations and only recently have we fully realised the issues, concerns and problems that that has raised. Now that mindsets are changing, there are opportunities to have that leadership at both national and local levels.

Marlyn Glen: It is always interesting to find out who is responsible for something and which individual is in charge. Although I am interested in the idea of champions, I wonder whether we also need one person in charge.

Ian Findlay: The concept of champions is really important. Champions can work at various levels. We can use personalities, who will act as strong leaders for certain people, especially young people, who often look to role models. The other sort of champions are strong leaders in local government and central Government—people who are passionate and positive on the topic and who have energy. It might be that they do not actually believe that walking and cycling per se are the most important thing. As Paul Tetlaw said, walking and cycling are perhaps means to bigger public policy ends, such as on health, transport and economic benefits. If we couch active travel in those terms and explain that walking and cycling are means to those big public policy benefits, we will encourage people to take on that leadership role more readily.

Keith Irving: If people see that the chief executive of an organisation parks their car in their own private parking space at the front door—I will not mention any organisations by name—the perception is, "If I want to be the top guy, that is what I have to do." There is a role for the people at the top, and organisations have to take that on, but ultimately every one of us as an individual has a role to play. Without generalising too much, we are social beings. If we see people walking or cycling, we are more likely to walk or cycle

ourselves. Champions are important. Every one of us can be a champion and help to reclaim our streets.

Marlyn Glen: The committee has heard calls, including from Living Streets Scotland, for a national active travel strategy. Do you all support that proposal? If so, what should the plan cover and how could its implementation be monitored?

Keith Irving: I will start on that. The plan should bring together many initiatives, ideas, policies and good intentions that are disparate at the moment. We should have a target and monitor progress towards it. I do not need to tell you guys how a good, solid action plan works, whatever aspect of public policy it covers.

To reiterate what John Lauder said, it is important for the plan to be taken on enthusiastically, and it is essential that it has resources attached; otherwise, it is less likely to receive a fair hearing. The plan should have teeth. It is probably not sufficient for it to say, "Isn't active travel a good thing? Wouldn't it be nice if we all walked and cycled more?" There are also enforcement issues. If an organisation ignores a particular policy—I can go into specifics if you like—there should be some way of enforcing it. Finally, on monitoring, it is important to collect data on walking to school or to work and general walking levels, and similar information on cycling, so that we know how we are progressing and can reflect the changes on the ground. I think that that answers Rob Gibson's point that we need the evidence to back up what we are doing.

15:30

Ian Findlay: We would support enthusiastically an active travel action plan, as opposed to a strategy—the emphasis should be on implementation rather than on strategy. It would be a classic case of the process being as important as the product. The product of the action plan—who is going to do what and by when—is extremely important but, as was demonstrated by the cycling action plan, the process of producing a plan is also important. It is a good process. Someone has to decide that we have an action plan, so leadership is shown by the fact that you produce a plan. For it to be a good plan, you have to get the various key stakeholders together, which is another good part of the process. You then have to decide on your vision—what you want to do. You then have to think about targets and how you will know if you are achieving your vision. You then need to set yourself resources and finally you need to monitor. We would support an action plan not just because it would be a plan that we could all have, but because of the process that would need to be followed to produce it.

Chris Thompson: I also support an action plan. The school travel planning process resulted from the school travel advisory group of 2003-04. That led to the production of an action plan for school travel, which has now been implemented widely. We are seeing the fruits of it some years down the line. In Moray, in the past two years we have seen modal shift away from motorised transport of 3 per cent per year. We already group figures for cycling and walking under the umbrella term "active travel". It is positive to have an active travel plan, which uses the umbrella term, rather than have things go their own disparate ways. That also focuses attention on the net result. Surely the net result for us is that we see a move away from motorised transportation, certainly for the school run. That is how we have measured it.

On the outcomes of the action plan, the plan bit is probably the most important; it should lead to a series of tangible measures, which show that there is something at the end of the process. The school travel advisory group did just that in appointing 32 school travel co-ordinators, of which I am one. One of the things that is missing at local authority level is co-ordinated delivery: a question was asked earlier about delivery. We are fortunate in that Moray Council is a fairly small local authority, in which communication is that bit easier. I know from colleagues that, on the wider sustainable travel agenda, communication can be much more difficult when a multitude of people have little bits of it in their remit.

I suggest to the committee that we should adopt sustainable travel officers—who would be similar to the school travel co-ordinators—at local authority level to deliver the objectives on the ground. If that vital link is missing, a plan that might be wonderful would fall flat on its face.

Elaine Sheerin: I agree that there has to be an action plan. The main thing for me is action—let us do something about it as soon as possible.

Marlyn Glen: We had an important contribution from the first panel on planning. Do you think that the town and country planning system currently plays a positive role or a negative role in the development of walking in Scotland? If you think that it plays a negative role, what do you think needs to change?

Ian Findlay: It plays both a positive role and a negative role. There are good examples out there of how planning has assisted with walking and cycling development. Unfortunately, there are also many examples of where that is not the case.

The key to us is a change of emphasis from mobility to the accessibility of amenities and services from where people live. Over the past three to five decades, the planning system has developed to ensure that we are all mobile.

Mobility, especially by car, has been the key, so out-of-town shopping centres and offices are considered to be okay as long as there are good road links—car links—to them. The amenities could be churches, post offices, schools or workplaces. The key is to bring the reasons why we travel closer to where we live and work rather than our having to be highly mobile and travelling 5 miles or 10 miles in a car to access services.

Keith Irving: I will not go over what Ian Findlay said; I agree with it. The crucial step concerns “Designing Streets”. The new guidance for all new residential streets in Scotland has been consulted on. There was a very welcome focus on creating walkable communities and moving away from creating dependence on motor vehicles alone for all our travel needs. It is crucial that there is an implementation task force for the guidance or that the implementation is monitored in some way because, to be frank, although many local authorities already do good work in planning, some planning authorities have privately already said that when the “Designing Streets” document comes out, they will ignore it, keep on doing what they have been doing and use guidance that they have always used because they have been professionals for 30 years. I realise that those are private conversations and constitute anecdotal evidence, but it is important that we are able to ensure that all Scotland benefits from the good guidance that will be in “Designing Streets”.

My final point picks up on what Ian Findlay said about accessibility, which is not just an abstract concept. If we do not plan services, shops and residential areas to be accessible, we exclude vast sections of the population: people who do not have the money to own a car—30 per cent of households in Scotland do not have a car; people who are too old or too young to drive a car; and people who choose other options. Therefore, accessibility will be crucial to the planning system in the future.

Chris Thompson: In answer to the question whether the planning system works, I would say that it does not work by default. From recent experience of planning new schools and suchlike, the initial setting is still instinctively to plan around motorised transport, be it the bus or the car. Until the culture has shifted and we start off thinking about active travel, that will not change.

John Lauder highlighted that Sustrans had audited a settlement. The traditional planning approach creates isolated pockets of good practice or excellence around, for example, a new hospital. However, those stretch only as far as the end of the road and then we are back to whatever existed previously. We are currently undertaking an audit of the entire town of Elgin. Rather than looking at destinations, we are looking at routes

because they will make the difference. In the planning process at the moment, we do not have that linkage between routes and larger-scale projects. The approach needs to be bigger; it needs to take a step back and be more strategic.

Elaine Sheerin: The only thing that I can say about the design of streets is that we are lucky in the Gorbals because we are like a new build. It took a long time to build it, but now we have a nice design and the Gorbals is streetworthy. People can walk, people park their cars and things are accessible. We also have speed bumps, for example. There are two parallel main roads and two roads inside. The traffic cannot go anywhere, so it is mostly on the outside. We are lucky to have a nice compact area. The design is good. The roads do not connect, so drivers cannot cut through. If they want to go through the Gorbals, they must go to the main road.

Marlyn Glen: That example is good.

Alison McInnes: The previous panel expressed a clear view on the budget allocations that are necessary to make changes. What are your views on the level of funding and the funding mechanisms that are required to increase substantially the number of journeys that are made by bike and on foot?

Ian Findlay: We proposed a 10 per cent allocation in our submission because almost 100 third-sector organisations have called for that in the active travel charter. As a ballpark figure, we suggest that 10 per cent of all transport budgets should be allocated to such journeys. That should be spent at all the levels at which transport budgets operate—it should include 10 per cent of the transport directorate’s budget, 10 per cent of Transport Scotland’s budget and 10 per cent of regional transport partnership budgets. Root-and-branch involvement of every level of government decision making is needed in a 10 per cent budget allocation.

Keith Irving: I know how popular members will all be if they recommend that 10 per cent of local authority transport budgets should be spent on active travel, but the view of Living Streets is that that is crucial. National Government is involved, but local government has prime responsibility for our streets.

As for mechanisms, there is a debate to be had about whether ring fencing is required. I do not have strong views on that, but the mechanism should ensure that the money is spent to achieve specific targets. If the target in a local authority area is to increase levels of walking and cycling to school, resources should be targeted on the steps that will help to achieve that. Provided that we are clear about the goal that the money is being spent to achieve, the mechanisms are best decided by

the national Government, by Transport Scotland or by local authorities.

Chris Thompson: I echo those points, although I draw a distinction between revenue and capital funding. Before Sustrans started to manage the school travel programme, one problem was that the money that came via the cycling, walking and safer streets scheme was capital funding. It could support active travel infrastructure, but there was nothing to back up behaviour change. It is crucial that Sustrans has put money into the revenue side. An intelligent split is needed, so that the money can be used for what we term soft and hard measures—the two work in parallel.

Alison McInnes: Has the Gorbals healthy living network achieved all that it has with very small amounts of funding?

Elaine Sheerin: We have not had a lot of money. We had some money initially, but only to start up and to do marketing. Walking is free, and so is cycling really—with just a few pieces of safety equipment, you are away.

A budget backs up an action plan. It is okay to have an action plan, but money is needed to reinforce that. Money would help.

Alison McInnes: That is usually the case.

Spokes suggested that cyclist and pedestrian safety could be increased by the creation of a hierarchy of liability for road users, with pedestrians at the top as the most vulnerable road users. What are your views on that proposal? We will start with Keith Irving, because Living Streets Scotland's submission touches on the subject.

15:45

Keith Irving: The United Kingdom's civil liability framework is rare within Europe—only Ireland and Malta have a similar system—in operating on the principle that the pedestrian, cyclist or other vulnerable road user who is involved in an accident has the onus of proving that the driver of the car, bus or heavy goods vehicle was negligent. That can cause severe difficulties if there are no witnesses or other obvious evidence to confirm that the driver was distracted, for example, by using a mobile phone.

As the committee heard in its evidence session with experts last week, road user behaviour in this country seems to involve a lot of conflict between Lycra-clad cyclist louts and Mondeo man, with the occasional militant pedestrian who will walk in front of traffic. We are not very good at sharing space. Perhaps the liability laws have a role in our inability to share space. When we all drive—as most of us are lucky enough to do—do we think about the more vulnerable road users with whom we share that space? I do not think so. We have

some of the worst pedestrian casualty rates in western Europe—that applies both to Scotland and to Britain—and we have the poorest record for child pedestrian casualty rates. As we do not share our roads very well, perhaps we need to look at the liability laws as one facet of the aim to increase our levels of walking and cycling.

A final point is that the committee could helpfully tease out whether it is possible, on a Scotland-only basis, to change civil liability law, which also involves roads law and insurance companies. If the issue is reserved, we would certainly strongly support the committee's making a recommendation that a group be set up to tease out how such a change might work in practice. We could perhaps get the lawyers in a room to work out how to produce an outcome that would rebalance our streets.

Alison McInnes: Does anyone else want to comment on that issue?

Ian Findlay: I agree with Keith Irving's comments. We did not major on that topic in our submission, but such a change would help with the culture change that we have talked about. A liability hierarchy could help to bring that about, although, at the end of the day, the emphasis must be on responsibility and respect. That is the basis on which our partnership has worked in trying to improve access. The founding stone of everything that we do in our travel behaviour is the idea that we should all act responsibly and with respect for others. It is important to get that message across.

Chris Thompson: Certainly in respect of youngsters, parents would have more confidence if they felt that vulnerability was reduced. Such a hierarchy of liability would be one way of bringing about a swift change in vulnerability—perceived or otherwise. Motorists would at least have second thoughts before chancing past.

As members might be aware, the Cycling Scotland campaign last year—I think that it is running again this year—edged towards that idea. The campaign featured a picture of a child with his arms held out under the words, "Give me cycle space". The way into the issue might be to re-educate people in that way rather than to bring down a law from on high. However, perhaps the two things could run in parallel.

Alison McInnes: I have a couple of questions for Keith Irving. The Living Streets submission talks about "Creating walkable neighbourhoods". Given that street layouts and urban form change very slowly, how best might the walkability of existing streets be improved?

Keith Irving: At a simple level, there will be a lot of good guidance in the forthcoming document "Designing Streets". Its principles should apply when a street is being regenerated or when a

residential area is being looked at, so that, for example, traffic can be slowed on residential streets or visibility can be reduced at junctions to slow traffic. We know that that helps motorists, too, because it reduces the number of rear-end shunts.

There is a lot of good guidance in the consultation draft, which will be one of the most important ways to enable local groups to reclaim streets, because they will be able to find examples of what they would like. I hope, too, that that will be done at a relatively low cost. We are all aware of the budget issues, but there are many quick wins that should help to improve people's streets here and now.

Alison McInnes: That is interesting. The 20mph limit in residential areas has been rolled out across Scotland and is working well. Do you have any hard evidence that walking has increased where such zones exist?

Keith Irving: There is evidence from a specific scheme in Glasgow, which was monitored before and after. We refer to it in our written evidence, and it showed that walking and cycling levels went up in the traffic-calmed neighbourhoods. Crucially, road casualty levels have gone down—if that is not going to increase walking and cycling levels, I do not know what is. Both Edinburgh and Glasgow have good examples of accident records being cut by 20 to 50 per cent, depending on the particular area.

In Portsmouth, there is a scheme to have 20mph limits on approximately 90 per cent of its roads. The scheme started in 2008, so we do not yet have accurate figures on walking and cycling levels, but the interim report indicated that traffic speeds have come down by 7mph on streets where previously they were above 24mph or 25mph. I apologise that this is quite a detailed point, but that evidence indicates that we do not necessarily need road humps. Road humps are very effective at slowing speed and reducing road casualties, but they are expensive and unpopular. On some streets, it may therefore be more appropriate simply to post a 20mph speed limit, which is enforced as police resources allow. Again, we are very hopeful that, once the figures for Portsmouth emerge, they will show increased walking and cycling levels.

Marlyn Glen: I have looked again at the written evidence, particularly on pavement parking, which causes problems for pedestrians, parents with buggies and wheelchair users. All the witnesses are nodding, so I sense that you feel that it is important that pavements are used properly.

Keith Irving: Living Streets obsesses slightly about that issue. Pavement parking affects many people, whether they are pushing a pram, are in a

wheelchair or need to use a stick to walk. If the pavement is blocked, it creates difficulties. If the dropped kerb is blocked by a parked car, it makes it difficult for people. Academic studies constantly show that that is one of the obstacles to more elderly people with mobility difficulties getting round. The studies do not necessarily say, "Here's the top five," but it is consistently a factor. We consistently receive complaint letters about it, too.

Many local authorities would like to take enforcement action, but they do not have the powers to do so. In our evidence, we highlighted that local authorities in England and Wales have the powers to take enforcement action against dropped-kerb parking without the requirement for signage to be sited at every dropped kerb—such a requirement would not be a positive step, given the expense and plethora of signs that would be involved. We advocate that Scottish local authorities should be given similar powers. The City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council have made public their support for such powers, and we are very optimistic that we will get them in due course.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): I will stick with the issue of parking across dropped kerbs that partially blocks the footway for pedestrians. Is it not the case that the police have powers to take action against people who cause such an obstruction? I agree that the behaviour that you have just complained about is a serious form of antisocial behaviour, and yet the police do not regard it as such. I understand that that view has led to enforcement tapering off in recent years.

Keith Irving: Absolutely. The police have the powers to take action on dropped-kerb parking right now and yet they rarely use them. The offence is easy to spot. We are talking not about catching every offender but reminding all motorists that the dropped kerb is there for a reason.

The irony of pavement parking is that it is illegal to drive on or off the pavement but not to be parked there. The realistic approach would be to give local authorities enforcement powers. The situation is a terrible guddle. We know that some police forces write a warning letter to drivers who park a car that leaves less than metre of pavement, which means that wheelchair users struggle to get past, but that is still a bureaucratic approach. We need a simple approach in which we remind motorists that pavements are for people.

Ian Findlay: This is a classic example of the need for mindset change, and many submissions refer to the problem.

The car is still king. That remains the case in much of the design and management of our

streets, and the mindset applies to the police, too. A subtle but significant cultural change is needed in how we want to live our lives, and the committee inquiry goes right to the heart of the matter. I refer to issues such as health and wellbeing, the economy, community development, and social cohesion. The committee is tackling an issue that is no less important. A change of mindset is needed if we are to determine how we want to live our lives.

Cathy Peattie: My question is on pavement parking. The police tell me that they can challenge someone only if they see them driving on to the pavement. It seems that, if the vehicle is parked, the police cannot simply assume that the motorist has driven on to the pavement—yet how could the car have got there otherwise? The issue is a major one. Keith Irving spoke about a local authority byelaw, but I am not sure whether he knows that it comes under UK legislation, which makes it difficult for the Parliament to do anything about it. Have you done any research into the matter, Keith? Such research may be a vehicle—please excuse the pun—to move forward on the issue.

16:00

Keith Irving: The distinction needs to be made between parking on the pavement and parking that blocks a dropped kerb. In England and Wales, blocking a dropped kerb is an offence under the Traffic Management Act 2004. We need an equivalent act in Scotland; the Scottish Parliament has the power to act.

Pavement parking is a UK matter, as part of the highway code. However, Scottish local authorities have powers to introduce a traffic regulation order to ban pavement parking on a specific street. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament also have the power to enable a local authority to introduce a TRO across a whole area, rather than on one street, with exemptions for particular streets.

That brings us back to the issue of expense. Rather than enforce street-by-street TROs, which is incredibly expensive for a local authority, a local authority can take a more comprehensive approach and make exemptions where they are required. My understanding—I would be happy to discuss this further with you—is that the Scottish Government has the power to introduce legislation to give local authorities the right to introduce such a comprehensive TRO.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting—it is not what the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change has told the committee. It might be interesting for the committee to pursue the matter in its report, as it is an important road safety issue.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I will continue with a supplementary question on the issue and declare an interest as a mother with a buggy—I have become slightly obsessive about it recently. Your written submission mentions the fact that pavement parking is illegal in London but nowhere else in the UK. Is that because of a TRO that has been implemented there? Why is there such a difference?

Keith Irving: The Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973, which set up the Greater London Council—it was equivalent to the Scotland Act 1998 in many ways—included a single line saying that pavement parking was illegal. Around that time, in the 1970s, pavement parking was made illegal throughout the rest of the UK, but enforcement required secondary legislation, which was never introduced, and the enabling legislation was subsequently repealed. We are left with the anomaly that you point out—that pavement parking is fully illegal only in London.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: My next question is for Ian Findlay. Your written submission talks about the need for integrated travel. In our previous evidence session, we heard examples of the problems that are arising because we are not really getting to grips with that. How can we get through that barrier? Is the problem about planning? Is it about the people who are involved not putting that planning into effect? What is preventing integrated travel from happening?

Ian Findlay: That is a hugely important point. Most journeys that we make require at least one change of transport, if not a couple. In fact, almost every journey that we make involves walking, even if that is just walking from the car to the office, the church or whatever at the other end. Almost every journey is intermodal and uses different modes of transport, but in this country we have not been very successful at joining up the different modes.

We have probably all taken a bus to a railway station only to find, on arriving, that the train left five minutes before. In Oban, the classic example is of the train getting into the station just after the ferry has left for Mull. We can all think of similar examples. What is needed is an integrated approach to transport, which requires a strategic approach probably at the national level—looking at rail, ferries and that sort of thing—but definitely at the local authority level, between local authority boundaries. Quite often, a local authority will have fairly integrated transport within its boundary but the system starts to fall down as soon as people need to cross that boundary.

Integrated travel is a fairly strategic issue that at one level requires all the different transport operators to come together and think of integrated transport planning. At another level—this was

mentioned in the earlier evidence session—we need individual travel planning. We all have a responsibility to think about our travel choices and how we can get from A to B most efficiently. There is a role for individual travel planning: with a bit of thought, it is possible to integrate modes of transport; without thought, it does not work. Integrated travel is about joined-up thinking, from the national level right down to the level of the individual.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We spent a fair amount of time during our ferries inquiry looking into the joys of integrating ferries with bus and rail, but I am not entirely sure that we arrived at a solution.

Leaving that aside—thankfully—and turning to the relationship between walking and cycling and public transport, do you feel that walking and cycling are even taken into account when there is a new public transport development? With regard to improvements and modal shift, is there any emphasis on walking and cycling? In particular, I am thinking about the recent Network Rail consultation on car parking at railway stations, which considered just that—car parking—and nothing else.

Ian Findlay: No, walking and cycling are not sufficiently taken into account. There are probably some good examples of where they have been, but the Bathgate to Airdrie railway example, which was covered by the previous panel, is a classic one of where walking and cycling, as means of getting to public transport nodes, have not been sufficiently taken into account.

We all picked up on the issue regarding the consultation on car parking at railway stations. Living Streets, Sustrans, Transform Scotland and Cycling Scotland submitted a joint response to Transport Scotland as we were very disappointed that walking and cycling had not been considered in the consultation.

I return to the issue of mindset and culture change. The people who did the designs were not thinking sufficiently about the walking and cycling elements. It is a matter of finding ways of changing things so that, as the hierarchy dictates, walking and cycling are right at the top of people's thinking, followed by public transport and then the private motor car. Unfortunately, our mindset is still the other way round, and the actual hierarchy is the reverse of what it should be.

Charlie Gordon: I have a couple of questions for Moray Council. Mr Thompson, you have already touched on one of the cultural aspects of what your council did to increase the number of pupils travelling to school on foot or by bike. You mentioned role models. Can you tell us a bit more about how you achieved that change?

Chris Thompson: I am happy to. We called the scheme travel champions, and I am particularly proud of it. We went through a full branding exercise, and the scheme turned out to be very worth while. It has given the champions some kudos because of what they are doing.

I will give you a nuts-and-bolts example. One individual who works in a secondary school in Elgin wanted to do something about active travel at the school. The cycle storage was shambolic—in fact, it had fallen down, which was fairly typical. We asked the school to set up a group, so that it was embedded there and was not just about the council delivering a policy from on high. A group was formed, which contained some very able and willing people. The group members set out an action plan for how they wanted things to be done, and we worked with them. We set up the champion of the group with a simple, low-cost bike. By all accounts, she now cycles to school every day.

That is a living, breathing example of how things can move on. Previously, 20 to 25 children were regularly cycling at that school. The number has more than trebled—the figure now approaches 100. That is entirely linked with the efforts of the group and that individual in getting things moving. It is a school of about 1,000 pupils, so that comes to a modal share of 10 per cent, which is what we are aiming for, and the net spend could be equated to a 10 per cent investment. That is how things can work, in micro form.

Charlie Gordon: I was going to ask about modal shift statistics, but you have just mentioned some, and you also mentioned some earlier. Is there anything else that you wish to say about modal shift figures?

Chris Thompson: On the net benefit, I intimated that there has been a 3 per cent shift away from motorised transport in Moray in the past two years—those are the years for which we have robust data from the Scottish hands-up survey—but that figure should be considered with the trend line in mind, which is around a 2 or 3 per cent decline in active travel modes. If we put the two together, we are looking at a net benefit of around 5 per cent, which is worth while. For many regions, keeping the levels static is an achievement, because doing so reverses the trend.

Charlie Gordon: So we are talking about a real-terms trend, a bit like inflation.

Chris Thompson: Absolutely.

Charlie Gordon: Do you have any evidence that your work has had any impact on parents' transport choices more generally, for by the school run?

Chris Thompson: Absolutely. I refer to a point that was made earlier about pavement parking. Children have led effectively on that. It has been rightly said that no legislation enforces no parking on pavements, but things have worked effectively when children have been on board. In Moray, we have active travel zones around schools. We do not enforce good behaviour in them, but children do, including behaviour such as not parking on pavements and, indeed, not parking cars at all in the zones—people park outside the area, which extends for 250m or so. That has netted tremendous benefits. My comments are akin to those that Living Streets Scotland made—places have been given back their life and soul. People can walk about in them.

What was your question again?

Charlie Gordon: It was about parents' general transport choices over and above the school run and other journeys that they make, perhaps not with children. Have you seen a modification in parental behaviour?

Chris Thompson: What I am about to say is anecdotal. Random calls to the office are among the most interesting things that I deal with. Recently, a child's parent asked me about commuting by train. That question stemmed purely from the interest that there was in the school travel group. Children's nag power is important.

Charlie Gordon: Or pester power.

Chris Thompson: Absolutely.

Links or routes to schools that we have instigated are routes for everybody. We have taken counts on those routes and have noticed that they are used equally well, if not more so, by pedestrians. The routes are primarily cycle routes, but pedestrians use them. In addition, they are used equally well at weekends and other times. We considered who uses them at those times and found that families tend to do so. Investment for schools has therefore benefited everybody.

Charlie Gordon: There seems to be a revenue implication. You have volunteers and champions, but the people who do the pestering and nagging have to be organised and recruited. I presume that there is a churn of such people.

Chris Thompson: The approach relies a lot on personalities and people being willing to do the work. Our travel champions scheme relies on people putting themselves in that position and, to be honest, being halfway there already. I would like us to move towards a model that is more sustainable in the broadest sense, so that we do not have to rely on volunteers and people being kind hearted.

Cathy Peattie: I want to continue our questioning of Moray Council. I think that people

have been heading in the direction of my question. What additional policy or financial support would you like from the Scottish Government and Parliament to assist your work?

Chris Thompson: Earlier, I mentioned that the school travel programme has been robust and well thought through. It started back in 2003 with the school travel advisory group's recommendation to put in place 32 school travel co-ordinators. The programme is very successful, but it runs in isolation. It is just for schools. Parents make inquiries about it. I would like to see somewhere for it to go. We are picking up enthusiasm and there is movement. The programme focuses on schools, but it needs to be broadened out. There needs to be clear thinking about where it will go and how it will be channelled at the local and Government level. That is my first point. I see that you want to come in on that.

Cathy Peattie: No. What is your second point?

Chris Thompson: I have forgotten it. You can tell me.

Cathy Peattie: It is obvious that you are interested in policy that could make a difference.

16:15

Chris Thompson: Yes—policy is crucial. We have discussed where that sits. The idea of tiering the budget at 10 per cent across the board is good, but it could be difficult for local authorities, which is where the buck stops for constituents in seeing where the money is being spent. Selling the 10 per cent could be difficult, but it would be worth while. For the policy that is attached to that, I go right back to the action plan, which must give a clear direction from the start.

Keith Irving: Physical activity levels are flatlining, especially among 13 to 15-year-old children—the figures that were released last month show that only a third of children of that age are meeting guidance on physical activity levels. Given that, encouraging walking and cycling to school, as well as physical education, has a big role to play in making children more physically active and meeting the guidelines.

Chris Thompson: There is an additional point about the support from active schools co-ordinators. You are probably aware that they have a health remit. They have provided huge support in achieving action on the ground and they outnumber school travel co-ordinators by about 10:1. Active schools co-ordinators are a positive development, because they can help with delivery. The link is clear.

One of the most critical policy links has undoubtedly been with health policy. We have discussed how active travel hits health, social

inclusion and many other matters, so it is worth finding the hooks to put it on.

Cathy Peattie: Cycling Scotland's representative gave evidence that cycle training schemes in schools are not compulsory, so uptake varies throughout Scotland. How important are such schemes? Should funding be made available to make them compulsory? Of course, we must allow for the fact that children must have bicycles to start with.

Chris Thompson: We in Moray have considered cycle training. You touched on social inclusion, which was one of the first issues that we wanted to address. We loan bikes to schools during cycle training to ensure that children are not excluded on the ground of cost or bike availability. We also take a slightly broader sweep by linking in cycle maintenance—we have the cycle doctor, who maintains bikes in schools.

A range of organisations recently produced a document on cycle training in Scotland, which lists exactly who does what. I will not précis the document in 10 seconds, because it is complicated. Various bodies are involved at different levels but, in general, local authorities are not responsible for training. Training is not a statutory requirement and does not always happen. Many road safety officers administer cycle training, via the police.

All that I can say is that training varies. I am glad about the position in Moray, where the police handle the training for us. We also participate by providing bikes and ensuring that back-up is adequate. One of the most important aspects for us is that we take cycle training forward to a scheme that we run called real routes, which takes children in primary 7 to their secondary school. We provide that not just on paper but in practice. We have people who ride across and show the children how to reach their secondary school so that, on day one of secondary school, we lock in the benefits of all the cycling in the primary school years. It is critical to link cycle training to a practical application of cycling. Children might know how to go round a T-junction 20 times, but they might not know their way across town, so we try to make a link.

Cathy Peattie: All that you say is positive and I am quite enthusiastic about it, but the picture is still varied. How can we encourage local authorities throughout the country to provide training exactly as happens in Moray?

Chris Thompson: I do not know that there is a quick fix, because practice is so different. There is some very good practice and some less good practice, but we would not want to wipe away all the good practice with any new approach. Perhaps cycle training could be audited carefully via the

action plan. It is critical that parents feel secure in letting their children out on the streets to cycle, so a thorough audit of cycle training in Scotland is definitely worth considering.

Ian Findlay: We support what Cycling Scotland says in its submission. Cycle training is really important, not only because it provides children with skills and safety but because it is part of the cultural change. It encourages not only the children but the families to think about cycling. When I did my cycling proficiency test, which was rather a long time ago, the whole family was involved. The week before the test, things were put out on the road and my dad was out there making sure that I cycled correctly. It was all part of the cultural change. It is important.

Cathy Peattie: I think that I still have my cycling proficiency certificate.

Ian Findlay: Have you? I am not sure where mine is.

Elaine Sheerin: The Gorbals healthy living network has 10 bikes in store. In the summer, we have a cycle in summer programme to which we invite families. A mixture of people come along—the dads, the mums and the children. We use all the cycle paths in the area—we are lucky because they are nearby—and encourage the families to get involved in the local project that maintains them. We do that during the good weather, so it is really good fun. Everybody gets involved and combines walking and cycling. If the people are not walking with me, they are cycling with me.

The Convener: I have some further questions for the Gorbals healthy living network. Health is not within this committee's remit, but it has been put to us that health is one of the first and most obvious reasons why people might be persuaded to choose a different way to get about. Is that your experience? How does health relate to the other priorities and benefits that people encounter when they make different travel choices?

Elaine Sheerin: For me, with walking, it is the people who matter. We had a general practitioner referral. The lady did not want to walk into a gymnasium, so she came walking with me. She had to lose weight and her blood pressure had to come down, and that is what happened. People enjoy walking. We also had a lady who wanted to lose weight for her son's wedding. She walked and walked and lost 3 stone. She walks everywhere now.

We also did some environmental stuff. We took a dog on our walks through the Gorbals. Its owner did the pooper scooper stuff but there were no bins. We managed to get the cleansing department to put 40 bins in the area. It was easy enough to do that. That is a health issue as well.

There is also a social aspect to the walking. People meet up and the community spirit comes through all the time. That is how walking makes a big difference to psychological health as well as having physical benefits. A lot of the people who walk have pedometers. They always come back and say that they have lost a wee bit of weight, which means they are a lot happier within themselves, so it provides a big benefit to them.

The Convener: So the social benefits of people having a stronger sense of ownership of their own streets and neighbourhood come later. They may not expect those benefits; the health benefit is the main reason why you encourage them to walk.

Elaine Sheerin: When they start off, they are trying to improve their health. They start off by walking just a wee bit and then the distance gets longer and longer, plus maybe they can walk more quickly. Then they realise the social and safety aspects. They realise that it is not simply a wee walk just for them but that there is a whole package to it, and they get the benefit of that.

The Convener: Do you want to add anything on the views that have been expressed on road traffic speeds, lighting, safety and their impact on whether people will make different choices if they are concerned about their health?

Elaine Sheerin: As Keith Irving said earlier, in a compact area, a speed limit of 20mph would definitely make a difference. We have some speed bumps in the Gorbals, and we are lucky that a lot of fast cars will not go there because the bumps are high and the drivers do not want to damage their cars. Wee things like that, street lighting and drop-down kerbs make a difference, because they make it comfortable for people to walk. If they enjoy it—and I enjoy it—they get a lot more out of it. As I said, it is the journey that matters, not the destination.

The Convener: We talked a bit about national and local political leadership; community leadership also plays an important role. Has there been political leadership or support at council level or in other agencies when you needed things done?

Elaine Sheerin: The national programme for Paths for All was the ideal feed-in for me. If I want anything done at a local level, it is usually just a phone call away. I just phone the council, say, "We're doing the walking programme and would like to improve it," and action usually happens quickly. You might be surprised at that, but it happens. They say, "There's that person on the phone again," but they are pretty good, I must admit. Glasgow City Council has been really helpful.

The Convener: That is encouraging.

If there are no final questions for the witnesses and nobody wants to add anything else that has not been touched on so far, I thank the witnesses for their time in answering questions and for the written evidence that they submitted. If they want to give us further written evidence following the questions that we have asked, they should send it to us through the clerks as soon as possible.

That concludes the formal business. I ask members to hang around for one or two quick, informal announcements.

Meeting closed at 16:26.

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