

Scottish Countryside Alliance Response

Submitted to Draft Just Transition Plan for Transport

1.

I understand the draft outcomes

Agree

The draft outcomes reflect what the Plan should be aiming to achieve

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Is anything missing from the draft outcomes in the Plan? (optional)

Just like the proposed Heat in Buildings Bill, the government needs to consider the differing transport needs between urban and rural communities. Public transport is patchy and can be unreliable in rural areas, leading to a high number of residents relying on private cars or taxis to get from A to B. There needs to be a concerted effort to roll out faster and more reliable EV charging points if this plan is expecting businesses to switch to cleaner fuel vehicles. Research into hydrogen powered vehicles and other types of green fuel should also be part of this plan.

The [2024 Consumer Scotland report](#) on the consumer experience of electric vehicles found that consumers preferred to charge their vehicles at home as the public EV charging network was reported to be more expensive than home charging (28p/kw compared with 40-70p/kw at public charging points). Respondents also reported the unreliability of public chargers, which may be broken or not working for their vehicle.

What are the Scottish Government's plans for electric vehicles, and can it confirm that it still deems this to be the future of driving?

2. Please look at the draft Transport Just Transition Plan, and tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The Plan is easy to understand	Neither agree nor disagree
The Plan is easy to use	Disagree
The information in the Plan is helpful	Neither agree nor disagree
The information in the Plan is relevant to me	Neither agree nor disagree
The Plan is accessible to me	Neither agree nor disagree

3. How could existing transport groups consider just transition issues? (optional)

There is a need to look at transport networks to determine whether there are any gaps in services for communities that make it more difficult to travel for work, education, healthcare and social purposes. Residents of rural areas often are more isolated than their urban counterparts, so reliable transport networks should be key to allowing easier travel and cutting down on the need for private cars to access services. Look at the Workforce Mobility Project currently running in South Scotland as a good example of a project focussing on transport gaps in communities that cause barriers to access work, education, etc.

4. Are there any gaps in our priority actions to support people and communities in the transition of the transport sector?

Yes.

There is no mention in the plan of the costs to local councils, the Scottish Government and the public. Will there be government incentives for businesses to transition their vehicle fleet to electric?

It needs to be noted that rural residents sometimes need to use private cars to travel around the local area. Taxis are often used by individuals who cannot drive as a necessary alternative to irregular bus services in rural communities and school pupils, particularly disabled children, still rely on taxis for school runs. This should not be affected by any transition. Schemes such as community car-sharing through services including Tripshare (a free, web-based car-sharing scheme to link car drivers with passengers making similar journeys in South East Scotland), car clubs, and dial-a-bus services need to be promoted and rolled out further throughout rural Scotland.

5. Which of the priorities we have set out in the draft Plan do you think would be most helpful for people like you to reduce how often, or how far, they drive in a private car?

More access to online services so people don't need to travel unnecessarily.

Helpful.

Access to 'car clubs' which allow people to hire a car or van for shorter trips.

Helpful.

Availability of demand responsive transport for some areas for example dial-a-bus services.

Very helpful.

Better use of space for active travel and public transport.

Helpful.

Increasing costs to make driving a less attractive option in some circumstances, especially where there will be other benefits such as reducing pollution and congestion.

Very unhelpful.

Our organisation would not support increasing costs to make travel in private cars less desirable because rural communities rely heavily on private transport to quickly and easily access vital

services, which are often far away from their place of residence. Maternity services in Dumfries and Galloway give an example of a transportation network that is inadequate to allow an appropriate level of access to a vital health service. With the closure of the community hospital in Stranraer, women now have to make a 70-mile trip to access labour and delivery services in Dumfries. They either have to rely on private transport, which can be unaffordable, or take public transport, which can often be unreliable.

The cost of fuel is far higher in rural areas, which does not dissuade people from using cars as they are an essential mode of transport. Coupled with the necessity of taking more and longer journeys, this is an important driver of the iniquitous 'rural premium': the additional costs people face by virtue of living in a rural area.

Lastly, EV charging networks and the underlying electricity grid need to be improved if the Scottish Government wants a switch to green energy. Emergency service vehicles may struggle to be sustained on electric power, potentially putting lives at risk if there is a need to return to a charger.

See also 1.

6. Does the draft Plan take all groups in society into account in setting out a vision for a future transport system for people and communities?

The Plan considers the impacts of decarbonising transport on all groups in our society.

Strongly disagree.

The Plan considers the impacts of decarbonising transport on people like me

Neither agree nor disagree

As indicated, we are concerned that the plan is inadequate to meeting the needs of rural communities. In addition to our other observations, rail services need to be less expensive and more reliable. Services are often cut at very short notice due to staff shortages on trains. The same applies to bus services in rural areas.

We are also concerned that the needs of the elderly and disabled to travel safely and easily have not been properly addressed. More services need to be put on at busy times so that these members of the community can access public transport without having to wait in long queues and potentially stand. Low-access buses and trains should be used in all areas as standard.

7. Is there anything else you would like to see in the draft Plan for people who are more likely to face challenges accessing affordable, convenient and safe travel options?

Better connectivity between modes of public transport to cut journey times and the number of legs required to reach a destination. Safe cycle to work/school schemes rolled out across rural areas, using cycleways on rural roads that may be otherwise unsuitable for safe cycling, e.g. single-track roads with reduced visibility to oncoming traffic, etc. See also 5. above.

8. Which of the following principles do you think should be the most important to guide the development of a fair system of payment, to deliver a just transition to net zero in Scotland?

- Those who emit the most pay the most, with protections for low-income groups.
- Those who earn the most pay the most, without disadvantaging middle-income groups.

- Costs shared through taxation and incentives, such as reduced costs, will support low-carbon choices.
- None of the above.

None of the options are ideal but the least undesirable is option 3.

As stated, there are many rural residents that rely on private cars or taxis to travel around their community. To penalise people that drive cars frequently as a necessity is not fair and would further exacerbate the rural premium.

See also 5.

9. Are there any gaps in our priority actions to support workers in the transition of the transport sector?

Don't know.

It is important that the right training for green jobs in transport can be accessed through rural colleges and universities, with modern apprenticeships attracting rural workers to stay, train and work in these areas. There is an issue with the younger workforce moving into urban areas in pursuit of more job opportunities, which can threaten the future of rural communities.

The Draft Plan under Section 5. Businesses and Organisations, suggests that petrol stations and small mechanics' garages may be at risk of closure as people and businesses switch to electric vehicles. These services need to be retained in rural areas due to the necessary reliance on private cars. This plan risks penalising rural areas and small businesses. Often garages and petrol stations provide community services and support to the local area, stocking food and other essentials. Mechanics are required for agricultural businesses to service farm machinery, etc.

As the electric and hybrid fleet of cars start aging it is important that the infrastructure of specialist repair technicians is grown throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK. Currently there are 19 HEVRA ([Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Repair Alliance](#)) garages in Scotland, of which 7 are in rural areas. In the recent Consumer Scotland report respondents from rural and urban areas reported experiencing significant delays in getting their electric car repaired or serviced.

10. How important are the following actions to make transport jobs more attractive to people who are not as likely to work in the sector, such as women and younger people?

Programmes which encourage women and girls to enter science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) courses at school and college or university.

Very important.

Actions to promote diversity and inclusion within the industry, including workplace culture changes.

Very important.

Actions that address existing pay gaps for certain groups.

Not sure.

Actions to increase access to childcare.

Very important.

11. Actions to improve diversity in the transport sector would be most effective if they were mostly led by:

Business

12. Does the summary of priorities for workers in the draft Just Transition Plan address future workforce and skills challenges you expect to have, as the transport sector decarbonises?

The draft priorities for workers will address future skills challenges.

Disagree

The draft priorities for workers will address transport workforce diversity.

Disagree

The draft priorities will encourage new entrants to the transport workforce.

Disagree

We do not believe there is enough content in the plan to effectively answer these questions.

13. Are there any gaps in our approach to setting out opportunities and priorities for businesses and other organisations in the transition of the transport sector?

Yes.

It will be easier for urban areas to transition smoothly, not so much for rural areas and so continued reliance on vehicles that still use fossil fuels needs to be considered. As stated, EV infrastructure needs to be enhanced across the rural regions so that businesses can recharge their electric vehicle fleet confidently.

A survey by YouGov stated that "range anxiety contributes significantly to how EV drivers use their vehicles/the type of journeys they make, particularly among rural drivers, contributing to a reluctance to commit to an 'EV-only' future for some". Rural residents also need to consider the fact that cold weather can also affect electric vehicles by draining the car battery, which further affects confidence in the ability to reach a charging point when needed. The research reveals a need for substantial investment in Scotland's EV charging infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

14. What does just transition planning mean for your organisation or industry?

A just transition for the transport sector is important

Agree.

Just Transition planning is important for my organisation

Neither agree nor disagree.

Just Transition planning is happening in my organisation

Neither agree nor disagree.

My organisation needs more support for just transition planning

Disagree.

15. Which of the following priorities would you consider to be most important to enable you to transition your vehicles to zero emission alternatives?

1. Reliable infrastructure for vehicles (such as fuel or charging networks)
2. Access to low-cost finance
3. Cost of replacement vehicles needs to come down
4. Certainty about availability of parts and maintenance services
5. Technology for replacing vehicles needs to be proven
6. Mechanisms to work with other businesses on fleet transition
7. Other (please tell us more)

A longer transition should be put in place for rural areas to change over to greener forms of transport. Exemptions are required for farm vehicles and machinery. See also 13. above.

16. What are your views on the draft indicators we have set out for measuring our progress toward delivering the just transition outcomes for the transport sector?

Neither agree nor disagree.

More innovative ideas for renewable energy production are needed to keep up with the demand of charging electric vehicles, for instance making additional use of land that has already been developed by ensuring solar panels are installed on new housing and industrial buildings.

Damage to rural roads needs to be prioritised by local councils as this infrastructure is key to delivering just transition. In 2022, Highland Council was ranked 25th out of 32 local authorities in the [Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey](#). 36.5% of roads were deemed in need of repair. The top council reported only 21% of its roads needed repaired, and the worst council reported 49% of its roads needed fixed.

17. If you are aware of any other data being collected that could be used to monitor progress towards any of the outcomes set out in this Plan please share details below.

[Workforce Mobility Project](#). Project manager - Ewan Doyle. This project used data in the southeast of Scotland to change transport, spatial planning and economic decision making.

21. Further information about your organisation's response

Organisations may use this space to provide additional context for their response. This could be information about, for example:

- any research your organisation undertook to inform the response
- any engagement with your members or audience undertaken to inform the response

As set out above, the focus of the Scottish Countryside Alliance has been on addressing the rural premium: the added costs that residents must pay by virtue of living in a rural area. This is a key challenge to rural Scotland and reflects the reality of our members' and supporters' daily lives.

- We also ask for the electrification of road transport will require investment in upgrading the rural electricity grid and ensuring that the underlying electricity grid has sufficient capacity to support charging requirements at peak times.
- Our research ([Rural residents will pay £800 more per year to keep driving](#)) has found that across the UK as a whole, rural households spend almost £800 a year more on fuel than people who live in urban areas, paying up to 6p per litre more for petrol.
- In the longer term, we expect the Treasury to seek new means of taxing private transport given the shortfall in fuel duty that will arise from the decline in internal combustion engine cars on the road. Any road pricing system must account for the need of people in rural areas to take more and longer journeys.