20% car kilometre reduction route map
Transport Scotland call for views
4 April 2022

About Children in Scotland

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Questions:

1. **Do you agree with the overall behaviour change approach, and do you have any comments on the four behaviours outlined above? Please explain.**

Children in Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's roadmap and ambition to reduce car kilometre usage by 2030, as part of its response to meeting Scotland's Climate Change Plan. We welcome their goal to support people to live healthier, fairer and more sustainable lives by choosing alternatives ways to access goods, services, amenities and social connections.

We also welcome that this initiative is underpinned by Scotland's commitment to a just transition to zero emissions. Children in Scotland supports that this plan is not attempting a one-size-fits all approach and it acknowledges that reducing car usage may be more difficult for some groups – including those living in rural or island communities and those living with certain disabilities or with other challenges to their mobility. We encourage the Scottish Government continue consultation work with these groups to ensure their needs are met in this transition.

As an organisation dedicated to giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish, our response places particular focus on how this route map impacts children and young people, to ensure their rights are being upheld. We recommend the Scottish Government consults with children and young people on these behavioural changes and interventions, as stakeholders. The Scottish Parliament has underlined its intention to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Scots Law. This means that children's rights must underpin all policies. Young people have a right to be consulted on decisions that affect them (Article 12). Below, we've added reflections on each of the four behaviours and considerations the Scottish Government should keep in mind.

<u>Behaviour 1 encourages individuals to make use of sustainable online options to reduce your need to travel.</u>

We support the government in championing this behaviour change and the establishment of alternative 'digital hubs' where individuals can access resources online instead of in person, where appropriate. We agree with the Scottish Government that in addition to helping reduce travel, this could also support those on low incomes, with caring responsibilities, or with mobility challenges who might otherwise struggle to access these services in person.

However, the Scottish Government should ensure these services are still available in person. Digital exclusion / digital poverty remains a prevalent issue for many across Scotland, highlighted by COVID-19. Digital exclusion is "*experienced by those who do not have access to an appropriate digital device, an affordable or reliable internet connection, or the right skills to be able to use digital tools*."[1] In their report, Inspiring Scotland found that digital exclusion can have extensive, long-term negative impacts on children, young people and adults, including reduced access to education, employment, social interaction and other services.[2]

800,000 people in Scotland are estimated to face digital exclusion, and as of 2017, the Scottish Government estimates that more than a third of households in lower income brackets have no access to the internet at all and 400,000 individuals live in areas without 4G coverage.[3] In addition to lack of access, many do not have the required skills to make use of digital tools. A report by SCVO and the Scottish Government published in 2022 found that 19% of

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[1] Audit Scotland, *The digital divide - inequality in a digital world* https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/blog-digital-exclusion
[2] Inspiring Scotland, *Digital Inclusion in Scotland* https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Digital-Exclusion-in-Scotland-final-full-report-1.pdf
[3] Ibid.

people in Scotland don't have the skills they need to participate online.[4] It found that individuals who are older, from lower socio-economic background, with lower education attainment and those with a disability or long-term health condition are more likely to be digitally excluded.

The Transport Scotland route map sets out initiatives to help close this gap, including through a £5 million partnership with SCVO and COSLA to provide technology skills and training to 9,000 at risk individuals who are digitally excluded as well as the £9 million fund to purchase laptops, data and tablets for 25,000 digitally excluded children and young people[5]. Several of the route map's recommended interventions to encourage this behaviour change focus on expanding digital infrastructure. Intervention 1b outlines that Scottish Government's ambition to extend superfast broadband to 100% of premises in Scotland to reduce the barrier of digital exclusion.

We support these strategies and the Scottish Government's priority to extend digital coverage across the country. However, it is vital that services remain accessible in person for those who still lack either access to digital infrastructure and/or the necessary skills. We recommend that the Scottish Government continue offering training alongside the expansion of infrastructure. We also recommend that they to continue to consult widely to ensure that planned development meets the need of all communities and groups.

Additionally, 'digital fatigue,' which describes the feeling of tiredness and disengagement caused by using numerous digital tools, has been observed in families, children and young people receiving online support. In their Progress Review of Scotland's Play Strategy 2021, researchers found that this was particularly challenging for carers.[6] The Commissioner for Fair Access also highlighted the impact of digital fatigue on students in their report *The Impact of COVID-19 on Fair Access to Higher Education*.[7] These examples further support the importance of making sure that there are a variety of ways to access services.

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[4] SCVO and the Scottish Government, *Taking a Place-based Approach to Digital Inclusion* https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-wordpress/2022/03/SCVO-Digital-Taking-a-place-based-approach-to-digital-inclusion-the-story-so-far.pdf

[5] Inspiring Scotland, *Digital Inclusion in Scotland* https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Digital-Exclusion-in-Scotland-final-full-report-1.pdf

[6] XPlay Scotland and the Scottish Government, *Progress review of Scotland's Play Strategy 2021 Play in a COVID-19 context* https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/6001/play-scotland-play-strategy-review-play-in-covid-2021.pdf

[7] Commissioner for Fair Access, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Fair Access to Higher Education* https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/progress-report/2020/12/impact-covid-19-fair-access-higher-education2/documents/impact-covid-19-fair-access-higher-education/impact-covid-19-fair-access-higher-education/govscot%3Adocument/impact-covid-19-fair-access-higher-education.pdf

Behavioural change 2: To choose local destinations to reduce the distance you travel

Children in Scotland supports delivering the *Housing to 2040* policy actions to build stronger, liveable communities where residents can access resources locally and have their health and wellbeing needs met. This also aligns with the calls within our Manifesto for 2021-26 which asks the Scottish Government to ensure that all families are able to access high quality, affordable housing by improving the quantity, quality and environmental sustainability of the social housing supply in Scotland.[8] We support the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods, the introduction of safer speed limits in built up areas, and the embedding of the Place Principle and use of the Place Standard Tool. These policies and principles help to build a person-centred approach, where those living and working in an area are collaboratively involved in the development, growth and strengthening of communities.

We believe these interventions and the priority would be strengthened if they were underpinned by a Child's Rights approach. Children in Scotland has called for the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to build rights-based communities around the things children and families need, using UNICEF Child Friendly Cities as a framework across small communities, towns and cities. To do so, local authorities require the guidance and financial resources to make this happen.

UNICEF describes child friendly cities as communities in which "*the voices, needs, priorities, and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions.*"[9] These are communities where children:

- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse. (Article 19)
- Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for. (Article 27(
- Have access to quality social services. (Article 24 and 26)
- Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development. (Article 29)
- Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them. (Article 12)
- Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life. (Article 31)
- Live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces. (Article 24)

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[8] Children in Scotland, *Manifesto 2021-2026* https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Manifesto-2021-26-V1_Spreads.pdf
[9] Unicef, *What is a child friendly city?* https://childfriendlycities.org/what-is-a-child-friendly-city/

- Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves. (Article 31)
- Have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability. (Article 2)

Imperative to child friendly communities is ensuring spaces provide a safe environment for children and young people. One key step to this is reducing air pollution. According to UNICEF's research, at least one in three babies are growing up in UK communities with unsafe levels of particulate matter (tiny particles, smaller than the width of hair), which are among the most dangerous pollutants for our health.[10] The WHO estimates that as of 2018, over 70% of towns and cities in the UK have unsafe levels of fine particulate matter. These can have significant health outcomes, including reduced lung growth, increased risk of respiratory conditions and reduced brain development. Younger children and those living in areas of high deprivation are most at risk and an estimated one in three of children under the age of five in the UK live in communities with unsafe levels of particulate matter. We recommend the Scottish Government also focus on reducing particulate matter and implement strategies to improve air quality to ensure children and young people can access their right to a clean environment (article 24).

The shops and services in a community also have a big impact on the safety and accessibility of an environment for children. We also recommend the Scottish Government implement Children in Scotland's call to increase planning restrictions on off-licences and betting shops near to schools, playgrounds and other places where children gather.[11]

<u>Behaviour change 3: switch to walk, wheel, cycle or public transport where possible</u>

Children in Scotland supports the Scottish Government's ambition to encourage the switch to active travel or public transit where possible. We particularly support several of the proposed interventions. These include the increased investment to active travel infrastructure, improving access to cycling – including by providing free bikes to school-aged children where finances are a barrier, focused action on road safety and improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, and delivering Safe to School initiatives to ensure every child who lives within two miles of school is able to safely commute via walking or cycling.

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[10] Unicef, *A Breath of Toxic Air* http://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-breath-of-toxic-air_UnicefUKResearchPaper_June2018.pdf
[11] Children in Scotland, *Manifesto 2021-2026* https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Manifesto-2021-26-V1_Spreads.pdf

Children in Scotland commends the Scottish Government on the introduction of free bus travel for those aged under 22, the commitment to increase investment in bus and rail transport, the significant increased investment in active travel infrastructure, and the continued annual investment of £300,000 towards the Eco-Schools Scotland Programme, which support young people to learn and engage with climate change and understand the impact that travel choices have on the environment.

We want to draw attention to the benefits and barriers to cycling highlighted by children and young people, which the Scottish Government should take into consideration. Research from Sustrans found that only 2% of pupils aged 6-15 in the UK cycle to school, though 14% would like to.[12] More than half of the young people surveyed described their school environment as having too many cars and 49% said they were concerned about the air pollution near their school. These concerns align with participation and engagement work that Children in Scotland has undertaken with children and young people.

Through our Changing Gears project, commissioned by Cycling Scotland, Children in Scotland staff engaged with 300 children and young people to understand their experiences of cycling and road safety across Scotland.[13] The project was co-designed with a group of 9 young people, aged 9-15, and then our staff rolled out the work to schools in Moray, Perth & Kinross and Dundee. This work highlighted what children and young people like about cycling, and what challenges and barriers prevent some people from taking part.

Several themes emerged from this work. Children and young people highlighted that cycling was fun and a hobby that they could do alone, or with friends and family. While they acknowledged the environmental benefit of cycling, fun was a larger driver for children and young people. When asked about road cycling, children and young people highlighted that cycling was often cheaper than other forms of transport, however it was not seen as a good option for longer commutes.

Crucial to children and young people's experience of cycling was the importance of having high quality roads and infrastructure and feeling safe. Good cycle paths should be free of debris and have no potholes. Safety and perception of safety is very important to young people, and they highlighted the negative impact of busy roads, extra traffic and fast car speed which are

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[12] https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2021/september/survey-reveals-just-2-of-uk-pupils-currently-cycle-to-school/

[13] Children in Scotland, *Changing Gears: young people's views on bikeability, road safety, health and the environment* https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Changing-Gears-Final-Report.pdf

big barriers to safety and cycling. Some also highlighted that country roads can feel less safe than those in towns or cities. To make cycling safer for children and young people, they recommended the building of more dedicated bike lanes and more signs reminding drivers to slow down. For children and young people to cycle more, they need to feel safe. To make our roads safer, we need to redesign our public spaces for people, not cars.

Other barriers to cycling that were highlighted include financial barriers; not all young people can afford to a bike and other related equipment or to take part in cycling. Those who live in high flats also might be discouraged if they do not have safe accessible spaces to store their bikes. Having a disability, not learning to cycle when young and bad experiences with cycling might also prove barriers to cycling.

<u>Behaviour changes 4: combine a trip or share a journey to reduce the number of individual car trips you make, if car remains the only feasible option</u>

Children in Scotland supports the Scottish Government's ambition and interventions to encourage individuals to combine trips / share a journey to reduce car trips but has no additional recommendations here.

2. **What are the key opportunities of reducing car kilometres?**
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3. **What are the key challenges faced in reducing car kilometres?**

Children in Scotland has identified a number of challenges that may present a barrier to reducing car kilometres.

1. Insufficient investment – the goals of the route map are highly dependent on significant investment in active travel infrastructure, digital infrastructure, and bus and rail network expansion. These underpin many of the encouraged behaviour changes. If investment in these areas is not sufficient, individuals may not be able to change their behaviour. As explored earlier in this consultation, children and young people's perception of safety is closely related to the safety and appearance of their community. If communities are not transformed to be safer for children, young people (and adults) to choose active travel, they likely will not. Encouragingly, however, many studies[14] show that investing in active travel infrastructure has a measurable impact on people's behaviour, so this commitment should have a large influence on people's choices.

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[14] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140520301626

2. Financial barriers – COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis are having a significant impact on the finances of many Scottish people.[15] Increased cost of both public and car transportation might influence people's likelihood of changing their behaviour. Children in Scotland believes that many of the strategies included in the route map may have a positive impact on those struggling financially – particularly initiatives that encourage individuals to live locally like 20-minute neighbourhoods as well as those that reduce the cost of public transport, like the free bus travel for under 22s.

4. **Are there any further actions you would like to see included in future to support behaviour change 1) - reducing the need to travel?**

Please see our response to question 1 for our recommended actions to support behavioural change 1.

5. **Are there any further actions you would like to see included in future to support behaviour change 2) - choosing local options?**

Please see our response to question 1 for our recommended actions to support behavioural change 2.

6. **Are there any further actions you would like to see included in future to support behaviour change 3) -switching to more sustainable modes of travel?**

Please see our response to question 1 for our recommended actions to support behavioural change 3.

7. **Are there any further actions you would like to see included in future to support behaviour change 4) -combining or sharing journeys?**

Please see our response to question 1 for our recommended actions to support behavioural change 4.

8. **Do you have any comment to make on any of the specific policies contained within the route map?**

Please see our response to question 1 for our comments on specific policies contained in the route map.

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[15] https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/scotland/4063838/cost-of-living-crisis-scotland/

Do you think that the proposals set out in this plan could have positive or negative impacts on any particular groups of people with reference to the listed protected characteristics?

Children in Scotland recommends that Transport Scotland undertake an equality impact assessment and a child rights' assessment to understand the impact this route map may have on children and young people, as well as on groups of people with protected characteristics.

We commend Transport Scotland on the flexibility of this plan and acknowledgement that reducing car usage by 20% may not be feasible by all groups of people, particularly those with certain disabilities as well as those living in rural or island communities. We recommend that Transport Scotland engage in wide consultation with these groups to ensure their needs will be met and that these strategies don't impose additional barriers.

If you think the proposals will have a particular impact on certain groups due to protected characteristics, what measures would you suggest to maximise positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts?

Children in Scotland does not have expertise on what measures Transport Scotland could take to maximise positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts. We reiterate our recommendations that Transport Scotland do an equality impact assessment and a child rights' assessment to understand the impact this route map may have on children and young people, as well as on groups of people with protected characteristics.

We believe that the strategies put forth in the route map could have a positive impact on children's rights, however doing a child rights' assessment is the only way to fully ensure this. We also believe that the route map should incorporate the principles of child friendly cities, outlined more fully in our response to question 1.

We recommend that Transport Scotland engage in wide consultation with these groups to ensure their needs will be met and that these strategies don't impose additional barriers.

Do you think that the proposals set out in this plan could have a particular impact (positive or negative) on island communities?

Children in Scotland does not have expertise on the potential impact of this plan on island communities and we recommend that the Scottish Government engage in consultations with those communities.

If you think the proposals will impact on island communities, what measures would you suggest to maximise positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts?

Children in Scotland does not have expertise on the potential impact of this plan on island communities and we recommend that the Scottish Government engage in consultations with those communities.

Do you think that the proposals set out in this plan could have a particular impact (positive or negative) on people facing socio-economic disadvantages?

Please see our answers to previous questions. We also recommend that the Scottish Government engage in consultations with those communities.

If you think the proposals will have a particular impact based on socio-economic factors what measures would you suggest to maximise positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts?

Please see our answers to previous questions. We also recommend that the Scottish Government engage in consultations with those communities.

Do you think the actions proposed in the route map are likely to have an impact on the environment? If so, in what way? Please be as specific as possible in your reasoning.

Children in Scotland believes that, if implemented effectively, these actions could have a positive impact on the environment. To fully understand the nature and extent of this impact we recommend the Scottish Government undertakes an environmental assessment, as legally required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and follow the most up to date scientific guidance.

For more information, please contact:

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