



Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Inquiry into the Relationship Between Transport and Land Use Planning Policies

Written Submission by Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC) is Scotland's largest business representative organisation, representing 9,500 businesses employing over half of the private sector workforce, with one hundred and seventy staff in the offices of its twenty constituent member Chambers.

Scottish Chambers of Commerce welcomes the Scottish Parliament Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's invitation to submit evidence for this important inquiry. Recent years have seen significant reform of the Scottish planning system, but there remains scope to improve the operation of the regime in order to better ensure that we have a planning system designed to facilitate good development and to create the right environment for economic growth. The links between transport and land use planning are fundamental to achieving sustainable development and growth, but have perhaps been a neglected area in terms of the overall reform agenda. SCC believes that by strengthening these links, government can help produce greater certainty and connectivity in our planning system. We understand that the Committee is seeking views on three broad questions and we will focus our comments on these areas.

1. Is enough thought given to providing modern integrated transport connectivity and sustainable public transport provision when preparing strategic and local development plans?

SCC believes that there is a need to develop a more connected approach to the often fraught relationship between transport and land use planning. The policies of local authorities and bodies such as Transport Scotland often appear to be in conflict, with local development plans prone to outlining ambitious transport schemes without an accompanying commitment from Transport Scotland or secured funding from the Scottish Government.

Where local plans refer to transport projects, these must be fully budgeted, either by the local authority itself, through private investment, by Transport Scotland or by another arm of the public sector. Without pledged funding for transport projects, local plans can lose their meaning and value.

Of course, public funding for capital projects will be difficult in the midst of tightening public sector finances and projects like Forth Road Crossing and Waverley rail project which will consume vast resources if funded entirely from the Scottish Government's capital budget. Similarly legal challenges to settled transport commitments, such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, will simply add to the bottom line costs of key projects. At the same time, Scottish transport infrastructure is falling behind UK due to lack of investment over many years, so solutions must be found if transport is to have a positive impact on development, encouraging business expansion and attracting new investment into Scotland.

As a result, Transport Scotland needs to fully understand its role in facilitating an effective planning process and it requires to improve its communication with local authorities in terms of its budgeted transport priorities in order to ensure an effective and realistic local planning system.

2. Does the consideration of individual planning applications for significant developments take into account the need to provide appropriate transport solutions?

Individual planning applications always do take account of transport needs. In most cases a transport consultant will be used. However, as has been mentioned earlier, local authority transport departments can produce plans which contain unfinanced wish lists in terms of transport and transport standards are often outdated. For example, some councils in the west of Scotland are still using Strathclyde Region's transport standards, which are at least 14 years out of date.

Thinking has changed over the years in terms of transport access to, for example, housing developments and the role of public transport. New standards are more appropriate for modern needs, whilst some local authorities have embraced these new standards, some remain outdated and that is a problem. All responsible developers will attempt to reflect modern transport issues but they need to be met by local authority transport teams equipped with up to date standards.

3. What practical steps could be taken through the integration of transport and land use policies which could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

If local authorities are not using up to date transport standards, then this could affect greenhouse gas emissions. Outdated transport standards will be more car focused rather than incorporating modern public transport solutions. Transport standards can often be too inflexible.

Scotland tends to support using brownfield sites and existing transport infrastructure. This still needs to be the main focus but some greenfield sites can also make use of existing transport corridors and this can also help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, indeed it can often have a more positive greenhouse impact. Modern homes built using modern building standards are the best way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

On the issue of transport standards more generally, we should be asking the question as to why the 32 Scottish local authorities need 32 sets of transport standards. Consideration should be given as to whether regional standards or even simply rural and urban standards should be applied in future. This would greatly simplify the situation both for local authorities and developers.

**Scottish Chambers of Commerce
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