

# TRANSform Scotland

*the campaign for sustainable transport*

## UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – Fourth Assessment Report

Briefing from TRANSform Scotland – Thursday 1st February 2007

### 1. Introduction

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will tomorrow (Friday 2nd February 2007) release its long-anticipated *Fourth Assessment Report*. This report will provide the most compelling evidence yet of the human cause of climate change and of its devastating impacts.

The report, which has taken six years to compile, draws on research by 2,500 scientists from over 130 countries. It will clearly demonstrate that the scientific debate has moved on from whether humans are warming the planet to what the impacts will be and what we can do about it.

Transport is one of the main contributors to climate change. Yet despite recent agreement of the need to take decisive action on this issue, there is little evidence that the Scottish transport sector is taking effective action to reduce emissions: car use and road freight levels continue to increase, air travel growth is uncontrolled, while vehicle efficiency is failing to make significant improvement.

The Scottish Executive has fallen far short on the action needed to reduce transport's impact on the environment. From throwing subsidies at airline companies to bulldozing through new motorways, the Executive's performance remains poor. With transport the fastest-growing source of climate emissions, the Executive is going to have to get a grip - and fast.

Disturbingly, the Executive's agenda has faced little or no effective scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament - with the major opposition parties, the SNP and the Tories, advocating an even more irresponsible set of policies.

**In light of the IPCC's damning conclusions, urgent action is needed in the Scottish transport sector for it to reduce its emissions. Unfortunately, there is so far little evidence that the Scottish political class have the gumption to take up this challenge.**

### 2. The Scottish Executive's recent record on transport and climate change

A sustainable transport policy requires more than just spending more money on public transport. While an important part of sustainable transport, it would be entirely naïve to believe that infrastructure investment in public transport alone can deliver the step-change in transport that we require. But rather than back strong action to support its climate change programme ambitions, the Executive's recent record on tackling climate emissions from the transport sector has been abysmal. It has:

#### 2.1 Supported the concept of a Second Forth Road Bridge in spite of the massive environmental implications and lack of substantial evidence of need

The indecent haste with which politicians have pressed for a second Forth road crossing sums up the short-sighted approach to Scottish transport policy currently evident. First Minister Jack McConnell and Transport Minister Tavish Scott have both backed the concept of a new bridge at Queensferry, without the full set of evidence required to take an informed judgement that the existing bridge does indeed need replacing.

A Second Forth Road Bridge was correctly deemed unsustainable when it was rejected in the mid-1990s. At a time when the devastating effects of climate change are becoming ever more apparent, pushing for a doubling of road capacity across the Forth is environmental irresponsibility of the highest order.

## **2.2 Failed to support local authority action to reduce traffic levels - Edinburgh congestion charge and FETA road charges:**

The Executive has claimed that it supports local authority action in implementing road user charging, yet the Scottish Ministers went into hiding when The City of Edinburgh Council brought forward its congestion charge plans for referendum in early 2005, while in early 2006 it threw out the proposals from the Forth Estuary Transportation Authority (FETA) for road charges on the Forth Road Bridge. The Executive's failure to take a lead has killed off action on this front for the time being - despite the success of similar schemes in London and Stockholm.

## **2.3 Forced through urban motorway-building - Glasgow's M74:**

The Executive has pressed ahead with urban motorway-building in Glasgow despite its case being comprehensively trounced in the independent Public Local Inquiry by JAM74 and Friends of the Earth Scotland. The inquiry concluded that the new motorway would be bad for the environment, bad for social justice and bad for the economy. Friends of the Earth Scotland were forced to take the Executive to the Court of Session in an attempt to reverse the Executive's atrocious decision, but were forced to withdraw from the case.

## **2.4 Carved up the green belt for developers - Aberdeen western bypass:**

The Executive has failed to consider non-road alternatives to a project that will effectively destroy the western green belt of Scotland's third city, whilst doing little or nothing to improve conditions for commuting in/out of the city at peak hours. The Executive's comprehensive mismanagement of the process has brought forward widespread threats of legal action from local residents.

## **2.5 Subsidised short-haul aviation - Air Route Development Fund:**

The Executive has introduced subsidies to airlines for new air routes, despite air transport being the most climate-damaging mode of transport. The subsidies do not even make any sense in narrow economic terms as the air transport industry operates as an economic drain on the Scottish economy, flying out more cash than it brings in.

## **3. Need for action on climate change through the National Transport Strategy**

Whilst the Scottish Executive's National Transport Strategy, released in December 2006, reflected some limited movement towards tackling climate change, we are yet to see whether it will actually deliver on the commitments made. Whilst the retention of the road traffic stabilisation target and a commitment to further investment in public transport was a step in the right direction, further emphasis will need to be placed on encouraging individuals to shift from car reliance to more sustainable modes of transport - walking, cycling, buses, trams, railways and ferries.

Tackling carbon emissions is an economic as well as environmental imperative. A shift towards low carbon modes of transport - and *not* carbon offsets or other dubious techno-fixes - is the only way to bring about the dramatic reductions in emissions desperately required.

## **4. About TRANSform Scotland**

TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport and freight by rail or sea.

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