

Campaigners say government offering no new solutions on reducing car usage

Transport Minister Graeme Dey presented a report to Parliament outlining ways to remove more cars from the roads in Scotland, but the report has been criticised by environmental group, Friends of the Earth as offering nothing new.

Mr Dey said that it is imperative to drive down car use, and said: "I'm not aware of any other country in the world which is committing to such an ambitious objective.

"Understanding how people currently use their cars, alongside strong evidence that people want to see more Government action taken to address climate change, allows us to start a national conversation, to support people to do what they tell us they want to do to cut the distance they travel by car.

"We've done this for some time. But today we shift up a gear and with a much clearer destination.

"We're setting out a whole range of actions, some in the short term – like free bus travel for under-22s, Low Emission Zones and providing superfast broadband for 100% of premises – and some longer term, including our work on demand management options including pricing and the cost of motoring. What's absolutely crucial is that we all play our part and consider

how we can modify our own behaviour and drive down car use for a healthier, fairer, greener future.”

The [30 interventions](#) include introducing a workplace parking levy this spring. low emission zones later this year and by 2023 the ban on [pavement parking](#) – first introduced by Joe Fitzpatrick MSP some ten years ago – will be in place.

Opposition MSP Graham Simpson said that the [report](#) is full of warm words by “little in the way of meaningful action”. He accused the government of stalling on their commitments to a national smart card and Labour’s Neil Bibby MSP picked on the workplace parking levy, saying that it was the wrong thing to do when the country is in the middle of a cost of living crisis.

Mr Bibby said: ““We need to reduce car use by building an affordable, reliable and accessible public transport – not by forcing people to pay for the privilege of going to work.”

Councillor Steven Heddle, COSLA’s Environment and Economy Spokesperson, said: “I am delighted that COSLA has developed the draft route map in partnership with Scottish Government. The evidence which underpins the route map is clear: our current level of car use is unsustainable and incompatible with our climate targets. Put simply, if we do not make urgent, deep cuts in transport emissions in the next few years we will miss our national targets and the opportunity presented by COP26 for Scotland to show global leadership

“The purpose of the route map is to help us find fair and sustainable ways to reduce car use wherever possible, recognising that some car journeys will continue to be essential.

“We are also clear that different places and communities will need different solutions. This is where Local Government can help make a difference, with local, targeted action which is supported by the right investment and expertise. Local

Government will also be critical at bringing together policies, ideas and data at the local and regional level to support delivery. We, therefore, firmly view the route map as being a key part of our joint work with Scottish Government on delivering a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy.

“I very much look forward to working with the Scottish Government and other partners to support the delivery of this target, as part of our collective efforts to achieve net zero by 2045.”

Friends of the Earth

Environmental campaigners have accused The Scottish Government’s route map to reduce car use which was published on Thursday, of being nothing more than a “rehash of existing policies”. A 12 week [consultation](#) has now begun.

The government committed to reduce car use in Scotland by 20% by 2030 in its Climate Change Plan Update in December 2020, and the new plan sets out how it will achieve this.

[The route map](#), titled ‘Reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland’, was introduced by Transport Minister Graeme Dey MSP in parliament. It contains 30 [interventions](#) to address car use. Many of these are already being delivered by Government and local authorities, such as the roll out of free bus travel for under 22s.

Friends of the Earth Scotland’s Transport Campaigner Gavin Thomson said: “The Scottish Government’s commitment to reduce the number of kilometers travelled by car by 20% is absolutely essential for addressing climate change. Transport is our biggest source of emissions in Scotland and our car-centric decision making has been devastating for sustainable transport.

“The route [map](#) that sets out how this will be achieved is a

long list of the measures already introduced by the Scottish Government. This is a rehash of existing policies that doesn't address the fundamental issues.

“People in Scotland are overpaying for a public transport system we don't control. We need to take public transport back into our hands, and make it free for everyone. Without that level of ambition, we won't reduce car use or climate emissions.

“The review of the planning system in Scotland which is currently taking place is a great opportunity to make real changes to how we move around. Ideas like turning car parks into public parks or changing density requirements for urban developments could change how we think about transport. But so far these ideas are absent from the Government's plans.”

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kilometres-by-2030/>