

Upsurge in cycling numbers confirmed by Scottish Transport figures

Friends of the Earth say that new Scottish Transport statistics for 2020-21 show that people will cycle if they feel safe, and if car traffic is low.

The [new statistics](#) show the level of financial help given to the bus industry during the first year of the pandemic, with £340 million awarded from local and central government.

There was a 63.5% increase in cycling in 2020-21 with a reduction in use of all other forms of transport due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Public transport journeys fell from 502 million journeys in 2019-20 to 153 million made in the year to 2021.

The environmental campaign group point out that bus fares have increased by 6% in the last five years in Scotland whereas the increase for the rest of Britain was 3%.

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Air Pollution Campaigner Gavin Thomson commented: "These statistics confirm the huge increase in cycling we witnessed over the first year of the pandemic. People will cycle if they feel safe, whether that means fewer cars on the road or segregated cycle lanes. As we head into the elections, all local council candidates need to recognise there are huge benefits to their area of making it safe and easy to cycle.

“These [figures](#) show just how much the public purse is subsidising the bus industry. But politicians have failed to get value for money. Fare rises far above the UK average, constant route cuts, and a complete lack of control or accountability. Councils need to use the new bus powers to take control of our bus network; if we’re paying for it, we should control it.

“This data is a snapshot from the first year we faced huge societal changes due to Covid-19. We still don’t know what the world will look like on the other side of this pandemic, but there are opportunities to deliver on those early promises to build back better and greener. Councils have a range of powers at their disposal to make it safe, easy, and cheap to travel sustainably.”