

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – OUR ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORKS

Introduction

The Scottish Government is keen to bring together views and ideas from a wide range of sectors and to explore the priorities Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) should address.

In the sixteenth in a series of Think Pieces, Rona Gibb, writes on behalf of Paths for All, setting out its thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically our active travel networks. The opinions expressed are that of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion.

The issues and opportunities:

For many centuries everyone walked everywhere. As in most parts of the world, technology, urbanisation and increasingly sedentary work environments and lifestyles, alongside ever-increasing car use, has meant opportunities for physical activity in our daily lives have been 'planned out'. Our places and spaces have been designed for cars not people and the predominance of 2.5 million registered cars in Scotland encourages inactivity, pollutes our air and supports disconnected communities! *'...obesity, inactivity, depression, and loss of community has not 'happened' to us: rather we legislated, subsidised and planned it'*

We need to address decades of creating dispersed developments and encourage people back into the centre of our towns and cities to live and work. Walking, as part of active travel, is about improving quality of life and quality of place. With over 50% of all driven journeys in Scotland being less than 5km, and 26% less than 2km, there is plenty of scope for achieving a significant shift to walking, cycling and public transport as the most sustainable forms of transport. Where we live and work and how we travel and take recreation every day are all part of being able to live happy, healthy lives.

Walking, along with cycling, is the most sustainable means of daily travel for short journeys. Walking requires only a fraction of the space needed for a car, is more economical, both for the individual and in terms of investment in public infrastructure and causes no noise or air pollution. For longer journeys, it is the most carbon-friendly link to and from public transport. It is affordable for everyone and therefore is the most financially equitable of all transport modes.

Planning solutions:

A town or city needs to be easy and accessible for people to get around. Walking is an important mode of transport in its own right, and as part of other journeys i.e. by bus. Walking needs to be at the heart of all urban planning projects. Walkable towns and cities are better places for everyone. It is important that we create environments that encourage healthier choices. We need to design physical activity back into our

everyday lives by encouraging and facilitating walking as a regular daily active transport choice.

“If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.” Fred Kent

Investing in infrastructure and support for walking and cycling can increase economic growth and vibrancy and are good value for money and encourage more active travel and mode shift. Increasing walking and cycling (active travel) can stimulate economic growth in urban areas and benefit local shops. The highest value for money transport projects are smarter choices, pedestrian and cycle schemes, local safety schemes and some bus schemes. This suggests that investment in the walking environment is likely to be at least, if not better, value for money than other transport projects.

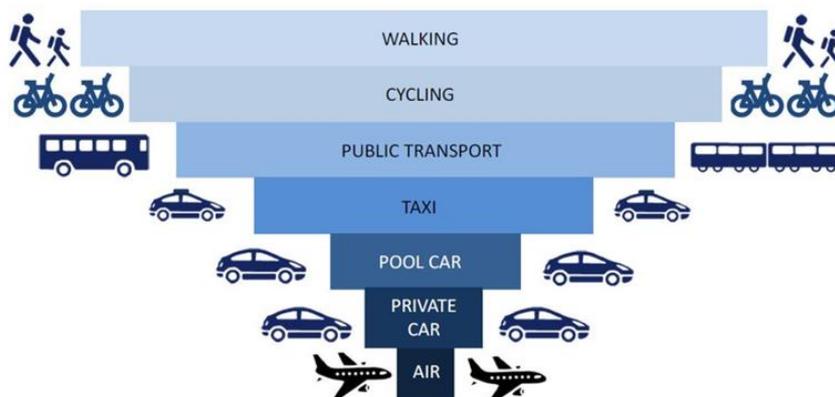
Summary:

Short term (next 10 years) – what will happen?

- Fully implement the Place Principle
- The National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy, development plans and development management processes will mainstream/ prioritise infrastructure and the right environments to encourage walking and active travel.
- The planning process is at the core of the ‘system change’ that is needed to help reverse the policy trends that we currently have and make active travel, walking and walkable communities the priority they should be.

Overall – what should happen?

- Plan and prioritise all developments with walking, cycling and public transport at the centre using the Transport Hierarchy



- In moving towards a more walkable world we will need transformative change in our towns and cities. The time to design around the car has gone and we need to place ‘walkability’ and active travel at the centre of future planning. Walking must become a lever for social change, for everything from healthier neighbourhoods

to a more sustainable planet– and walkability needs to be imbedded into the DNA of urban planning.

Biography

Paths for All is a Scottish charity, championing everyday walking, for everyone, everywhere. Our vision is for a happier, healthier Scotland where physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but for cycling and other activities, to make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.