

Consultation Title	<b>National Transport Strategy 2</b>
Date	<b>23/10/19</b>
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Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) is the voice of rural businesses throughout Scotland. We are a membership-based organisation representing a wide range of rural businesses, including farmers, foresters, tourism operators, housing providers, leisure companies, and renewable energy providers.

Our members provide a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits which are vital to the success and survival of communities throughout rural Scotland including the islands. They play a critical role in ensuring sustainable, healthy and empowered rural communities, providing housing, employment and a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits.

As an organisation SLE welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation as we consider the availability of transport to be one of the important factors in enabling Scotland's rural businesses and communities to thrive. Rather than answer specific questions, SLE wish to make the following comments;

In general, we welcome the aspiration behind the vision and agree with its contents. The only point we would make in relation to the vision is around the use of the word sustainable in this context. Our members are of the view that more often than not, the only 'sustainable' option for many people living and working in our rural communities is to own and use a car for all or most of their journeys. This fact of rural life for many should be key to all considerations in relation to sustainable transport options discussed throughout this strategy.

The section on 'managing demand' on page 59 proposes embedding a 'sustainable travel hierarchy' in decision making to promote walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options as a preference to single occupancy private car use. However, given the nature of employment patterns and geography in much of rural Scotland and our above comments about sustainable development, we consider this model to be unrealistic. In many remote rural areas, the model could almost be inverse, where the only sustainable choice for those living and working in these areas is car use.

Given this pattern of transport use is not likely to change significantly, SLE advocates a 'rural first' approach for the rollout of a network of electric charging points to ensure that individuals in rural areas will be able to charge electric cars conveniently. This approach will see rural businesses incentivised to invest in fleets of electric vehicles, contributing to reducing carbon emissions.

We particularly welcome the strategy's priority for transport to help our economy prosper. In our view, helping the economy prosper and taking climate action should be the focus of the transport strategy, as this will result in the other two priorities (promoting equality and improving health and wellbeing) to be positively impacted as a knock-on effect.

We generally agree with the challenges outlined in Chapter 3, although much of them are very different for rural areas of Scotland. This is why we welcome the section on "remote, rural and island communities" which accurately summarizes the issues face by many in those areas. However, we would like to reiterate, for those in employment in the land management sector, for example, it is not

possible for them to carry out their work without access to a vehicle they can drive. This cannot be changed by improved access to public transport and it is the only 'sustainable' option.

In our view, the policies which will have a positive impact in overcoming the challenges for the remote, rural and island areas should be given priority. We welcome the policy to “embed the implications for transport in spatial planning and land use decision making” which seeks greater integration between transport, spatial planning, and how land is used. Similarly, we support the policy to “provide a high-quality transport system that integrates Scotland and recognises our different geographic needs”. It is our view that this policy will help address challenges to connectivity and cost disadvantages experienced in remote rural and island areas.

We also welcome the policy to “embrace transport innovation that positively impacts on our society, environment and economy”, and hope that early adoption of electric vehicles and charging points can be rolled-out in rural areas as a matter of priority. Doing so will facilitate the reduction of the transport sector's emissions in support of national objectives on air quality and climate change.

However, without greater detail at this stage, it is difficult to understand how impactful these policies will be in alleviating challenges such as longer commuting distances, additional cost of occasional trips to the mainland and additional costs for inter-island travel. The policies do not directly commit to a “rural first” approach to rolling out a network of electric charging points, nor do they specifically support the roll out of electric vehicles to rural areas. We consider that both these measures will be needed in rural areas where vehicle ownership will continue to be essential for a significant percentage of the population.

Many SLE members are engaged in forestry operations and by definition have an interest in freight. We therefore welcome the strategy's commitment to ensure that freight “is managed and delivered efficiently to support business performance and contribute to a successful economy.”. We note that the strategy identifies the problems associated with freight, however we consider it is lacking in offering practical solutions to the impacts generated by the by the movement of goods vehicles.

SLE would like to see dual use of transport infrastructure where possible. For example, if there is new (or existing) rail infrastructure being used for passenger transport, we would like to see this being used for freight transport as well. Where this already happens, we would like to see capacity improved by greater efficiency. We consider it a key priority for Scottish Government and its agencies to look at investing in rail and road infrastructure for freight. We understand the cost implications around developing rail for freight, but this can be mitigated to some extent by considering such projects in conjunction with rail for public transport. The connection between land use and spatial strategies could be very important in ensuring appropriate measures are put in place to minimise the effects of freight traffic.