

ITEM No. 10

Report No 682/96

ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE

29 AUGUST 1996

SUBJECT: ROAD TRAFFIC REDUCTION BILL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: This report comments on issues arising from a request from the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental protection to support the Road Traffic Reduction Bill.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee note the request from the National Society For Clean Air and Environmental Protection to support the Road Traffic Reduction Bill at this time and advise the society that while generally supporting their aims, particularly in relation to major urban areas, that further consideration should be given to the differing circumstances pertaining in rural areas.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection (NSCA) have invited the Council to support the Road Traffic reduction Bill (copy letter attached). The NSCA letter gives some brief information on the Bill but does not contain full details. It suggests that introducing the Bill would lead to policies aimed at promoting alternatives to car use and would also lead to policies reducing the need for travel, by better use of planning policy and the promotion of new communication systems.

3 ANGUS POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Finalised Tayside Structure Plan 1993 includes among its strategic priorities for transport and communications:

- to ensure that transport policy contributes to addressing issues of sustainability;
- to reduce the need to travel particularly by car for longer distance journeys between home and workplace;
- to restrain further growth in the use of private transport where public transport can meet a greater part of future travel demand;
- to further develop provision for cycling and walking as important transport modes particularly for local trips, the safety and attractiveness of which need to be enhanced.

- 3.2 Angus Council Public Transport Policy Statement includes among its objectives:

- to seek to halt the decline and accentuate the role of public transport services, particularly as a means of stemming rural depopulation and supporting the provision of other services and employment opportunities;

- to develop the role of public transport within the community, providing mobility for those without access to cars, as an attractive alternative to those with access to cars and contributing to addressing levels of sustainability.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 While some of the objectives of the Bill, as summarised in the NSCA letter appear to be generally compatible with elements of the approach being followed in Angus there appears a distinct urban emphasis in, for example, the discussion of improving air quality. The environmental and sustainability aims of reducing road traffic are understood but the NSCA confirm that the preparation of any local traffic reduction plan should not set targets, recognising that traffic is more easily reduced in some areas than in others. This is particularly relevant in Angus which contains large rural areas where the car is often an important necessity as public transport alternatives are limited and services can be at a distance
- 4.2 Policies which are designed to address largely urban-based congestion and pollution do not adequately take into account the different problems in many rural areas. Patterns of private car use are generally very different in rural areas where there is a much higher degree of car dependence. In many rural situations, owning a car is the only practical and economical way to get around.
- 4.3 Rural car use generally does not cause congestion, and the level of emissions reached in most rural areas does not give cause for medical concern. It is mainly in the context of CO₂ emissions that rural car use contributes, in proportion to its use, to a global problem
- 4.4 An approach which does not unnecessarily constrain the "appropriate" use of cars for medium or longer-distance rural journeys, while discouraging "inappropriate" use for short-distance or urban journeys would be more suitable for rural areas including much of Angus. In any event the different needs of rural areas in the context of car dependence and public transport provision should be recognised so that blanket policies designed with national and global concerns in mind do not cause disproportionate hardship. Indeed many of the problems addressed in the Bill appear largely, but not entirely, concentrated in large urban areas and along heavily used inter-urban corridors.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director of Law & Administration, Director of Finance and the Director of Roads have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 It would be premature for the Council to give unconditional support to the Road Traffic Reduction Bill as requested by the NSCA where the rural interests of Angus are not necessarily fully taken into account from the information forwarded.

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:-

Scottish Consumer Council: Sustainable Transport Policy and People Living in Rural Areas: A Policy Paper

AA/CR/MR/KW
20 August 1996

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning, Transport & Economic Development



To: The Chief Executive
All local Authorities

1996 JUL 22 136 North Street, Brighton BN1 1RG
Telephone: 01273 326313, Fax: 01273 735802
EMail: cleanair@mistral.co.uk

16 July 1996

Dear Chief Executive,

Re: Road Traffic Reduction Bill

I am writing to draw your attention to the Road Traffic Reduction Bill and to ask you to join almost 80 other local authorities now supporting the Bill.

The Bill would require the Secretary of State for Transport to draw up a Traffic Reduction Plan to reduce road traffic by 5% and 10% by 2005 and 2010 respectively. It would also require local authorities to draw up Local Traffic Reduction Plans setting out the measures they believe necessary to reduce traffic levels in their area. Local authorities would not be set targets, however, recognising that traffic is more easily reduced in some areas than in others.

The Bill also states that money would be made available from central Government to carry out the plans drawn up by local authorities. Obviously, it is vital that local authorities are given the finance to carry out the new duties the Bill gives them.

NSCA believes the Bill is an important step forward in improving air quality. Road traffic is the single largest source of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and black smoke emissions. Exhaust fumes contain known carcinogens, such as benzene and 1,3 butadiene. Fine black soot from diesel exhausts (PM10 particles) has been found to increase the chances of death through heart and lung disease, leading to an estimated 10,000 premature deaths each year.

Introducing the Bill would lead to policies aimed at promoting alternatives to car use. It would also lead to policies reducing the need for travel, by better use of planning policy and the promotion of new communication systems.

I hope that your authority will support this Bill. Your support at this stage could be extremely important, as the Bill's promoters are hoping to get the Bill adopted by an MP in the next session of Parliament. The support of local authorities will add great weight to this campaign.

If you do decide to support the Bill I would also ask you to contact your local MPs and ask them to support the Bill. They can show their support by signing a House of Commons resolution. Early Day Motion 21 (EDM 21) which supports the Bill.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter.

Yours sincerely

M Eames

Dr Malcolm Eames
Policy Officer, NSCA

