

## Environmental Protection Scotland

Room 3, Caledonian Suite, 70 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2QZ

Tel: 0141 333 6655 Fax: 0141 333 1116

Email: [admin@ep-scotland.org.uk](mailto:admin@ep-scotland.org.uk) [www.ep-scotland.org.uk](http://www.ep-scotland.org.uk)

Environmental Protection Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
SCIO Scottish Charity No. SC 043410



# Environmental Protection Scotland

---

### **THE HERALD – AGENDA COLUMN – PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> 2019**

## **IT IS TIME TO COOL OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE CAR**

**BY JOHN BYNORTH, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SCOTLAND**

SCOTLAND'S love affair with the motor car accounts for around 84 per cent of the 2.9 million vehicles on our roads.

This obsession with driving, even the shortest of distances, is a major contributory factor to air quality problems in towns and cities.

Emissions from car exhausts, older bus fleets, HGVS and diesel taxis contribute to more than one-third of harmful nitrogen oxides (NOX) and one-sixth of Particulate Matter<sub>10</sub> (PM) in Scotland. PMS are on average 30 times smaller than a human hair and enter the lungs, particularly affecting children and people with respiratory ailments such as asthma.

How policy-makers encourage mass behaviour change in relation to car use is a pressing issue.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's pledge last week in the Programme for Government (PfG) to invest £500 million over the next five years on "cleaner" and faster bus services is a start. The relatively slow speed of some services have been blamed for the sharp drop in passenger numbers over the past decade. Many of these bus users have been pushed into using cars.

The effort required to change public attitudes towards private vehicle use was a recurrent theme in Professor Campbell Gemmill's independent review of the Scottish Government's Cleaner Air For Scotland (CAFS) strategy that came out last month.

The former SEPA chief executive set expert working groups the task of producing recommendations aimed at strengthening Scotland's air quality programme.

Prof Gemmill's final report included proposals for a mass social marketing exercise to discourage car use and a national "citizen science" programme to engage communities on the environmental impacts of the decisions they make.

These could help people question the wisdom of using their vehicle for shorter journeys such as the school run and to the supermarket. Research in Cardiff found that 50 per cent of car trips were less than three miles in length.

Emissions from combustion engined car speak in the first five minutes after they are started. Shorter trips are the most wasteful environmentally and can easily be done by bike, bus or on foot.

Low Emission Zones, "bus gates" such as the two introduced in Glasgow last week, and Ms Sturgeon's PFG announcement of bus-only lanes, including on motorways, will reduce air pollution and traffic jams if motorists make the switch to sustainable forms of transport.

THE Transport (Scotland) Bill, currently before the Scottish Parliament, includes provision for local authorities to introduce the controversial Workplace Parking Levy. The city centre office parking charge has generated more than £53m for transport infrastructure improvements in Nottingham since 2012.

The CAFS review included a proposal for a vehicle scrappage scheme with a difference. Instead of being given cash towards a new vehicle if they trade in their older model, motorists would receive vouchers to redeem against ebikes and public transport season tickets. The collapse in diesel car values since the “diesel-gate” scandal could make this a valuable incentive for many motorists stuck with the vehicles.

The review also suggested that new building projects for anything other than existing trunk roads and motorways be given less priority, and ideally should end by 2024 – except where road safety was an issue or there were pressing rural needs. This argument is a bold one and the CAFS review said this would discourage people from travelling longer distances in their private vehicles.

Scotland’s towns and cities will remain irritatingly congested and uncomfortable places to enjoy life and breathe in good quality air unless people give up the car.