



12 January 2026

Councillor Miranda Radley and Councillor Ian Yuill

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Dear Miranda and Ian,

## **Budget**

Following our December liaison meeting we are taking the opportunity to follow up with comments in response to the budget consultation.

We note the very difficult position the Council is in and we do not envy you in the difficult decisions ahead. In relation to the consultation itself, we wonder how many respondents will even attempt to read the 101 page accompanying document ("*medium term financial strategy for the Council's general fund, 2025*") and therefore respond to the consultation in a well informed and therefore meaningful way. We suspect a precis document would have been of help to many – it certainly would have been to us. Secondly, we note that the options presented in terms of where spending can be cut are limited, in that they make some notable exclusions by omission.

As we mentioned at our meeting, we had noted in paragraph 4.1.18 (p65) of the document that there is the recognition that infrastructure spending is of great importance in climate change adaptation and mitigation:

*"Public infrastructure investment has a critical role to play in tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. We will increase spending on low carbon measures, climate resilience, and nature-based solutions"*

presumably in preference to measures which do not contribute to reducing carbon. We might have expected to see this reflected in spending directed towards cycling compared with transport spending aimed at vehicular traffic.

However, subsequently in paragraph 4.1.26, when low carbon projects such as electric and hydrogen vehicles, sustainable heating etc are again mentioned, there is no mention at all of cycling.

*“The Capital Programme continues to support several initiatives, including investment in electric and hydrogen vehicles, charging infrastructure and the hydrogen hub”*

Does the Council properly recognise that cycling can be a significant contributor to reducing emissions from transport? Cycling can of course contribute to other worthwhile public benefit objectives including general health and air pollution, with consequent benefits in reducing demands on the NHS.

We should also say that although we have read parts of the 101 page document, we acknowledge that we do not necessarily have a full understanding, and our analysis below may be incomplete or incorrect. Nevertheless we believe our simple analysis throws up points worth making.

We have gone through the list of projects included in Annex 2 and categorised those which appear to be spending on roads and traffic, versus those which are clearly in support of cycling or cycle infrastructure. Again we acknowledge that this is imperfect and some roads schemes (South Harbour Link Road for example) will include cycle infrastructure but are primarily road schemes and we have categorised them accordingly. We have also omitted projects such as Union St, Castlegate, the beach masterplan where there may be some spending on walking and cycling as part of a larger improvement or redevelopment. We have also excluded spending relating to public transport or road safety. We further acknowledge that some spending on cycle projects may come from other sources (BLE or LEZ funds, for example) and are not included in the general fund. Although in passing we note that those funds have also been significantly under-spent and have therefore delivered less benefit than they might have, thus far.

#### **Projects with clear and identifiable benefits for cycling, extracted from Annex 2**

		Aggregated 5 year budget 2025-30 (£'000)	Notes
551	Cycling walking Safer routes / Tier 1	1,660	1,2
844	Sustrans Active travel infrastructure fund	865	
931	New cycle lockers	62	3
806D	Ashgrove Connects	1,316	4
934	Options for a new River Dee foot and cycle bridge	0	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,903</b>	6

## Notes

1. Figure shown relates to 2025/26 only and no figures are available for subsequent years as we understand these will be awarded from central government at a later date.
2. 2025 budget is all or mostly being spent within the beach masterplan area.
3. Includes £22k within 2025/26. A figure of £12k also appears in red within the table on p97 which may indicate that the current year budget is being underspent by more than 50%
4. Spending in current year only – presumably planning or design, with no budget shown for future delivery. The same figure appears in the table on p97 indicating 100% underspend (?)
5. No budget shown.
6. Missing altogether – Murcar to Blackdog proposed cycle track.

## Projects relating to vehicular traffic, extracted from Annex 2.

(Projects relating to mixed mode, road safety, public transport are excluded)

		Aggregated 5 year budget 2025-30 (£'000)	Notes
789	Planned renewal and replacement of roads infrastructure	24,484	
861	Additional investment in roads	20,388	
854	City deal – transport links to Nigg Bay	21,669	
587	Access from the north – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Don crossing	670	
868	Car parking infrastructure	876	
806B	Berryden Corridor	55,095	
935	EV charging network	10,263	
<b>Total</b>		<b>133,445</b>	

Again, accepting that our analysis may be simplistic and/or incomplete, we appear to have identified projects relating to roads and vehicular traffic amounting to £133.445M over 5 years, compared with cycling-related projects of £3.903M over 5 years. The contrast is even more stark if we account for the fact that around one-third of the total we identified as cycle-related is in respect of Ashgrove Connects, is allocated to the current financial year, and does not appear to have been spent. If these figures are in any way correct, or can just be taken as indicative of a broad trend, less than 2% of the total relates to cycling. That clearly does not accord with the identified urgent need to invest in low carbon alternatives for the benefit of all our futures.

We are very disappointed that the *River Dee – new foot & cycle bridge* has no budget identified over the whole 5 years, and that the over-due Murcar to Blackdog scheme – supposedly, or *initially*, fully funded as part of the AWPR – is not even listed.

Returning to the consultation itself and the on-line response platform within the consultation hub, we suggest that the options presented are limited in scope. Should the public not be given the option to express a view as to whether they would choose to postpone or cancel the Berryden corridor traffic scheme, resulting in a saving of over £55M over 5 years? That would – at a stroke – resolve two-thirds of the Council's projected deficit of £83M over the same period.

We note the 40 spending reduction options presented in the consultation. Some of our members will have responded to that individually and we don't intend to do so as a group other than to note that some of the potential savings identified could end up being counter-productive, and have a greater impact of those who are already marginalised in society, and could have a major negative impact on service provision. Again we note that the Council's projected deficit for 2026/27 is £18M and proposed spend in that year alone on the Berryden corridor scheme is £21.5M.

We have always felt that the Berryden scheme is fundamentally mis-conceived. You can read some of our reasoning for that [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Clark - Chair, Aberdeen Cycle Forum