

Travel Pollution: It's Time to Push Public Transport to Electric Layton Brown, Stirling High School

It's known widely that large towns and cities have a problem with pollution and air quality. Not only is this bad for the environment, but also affects us, as humans. Road transportation makes up for around 68% of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. The Scottish government has already had a little bit of action on this, with the ULEZ in Glasgow, but it's not enough!

We need action in every city, we need more cycle lanes, bus lanes, public transport encouraged and improved. We need solutions!



With huge numbers of bus and train cancellations, are people really going to use public transport, or their own car? It may be more sustainable to travel by train than by car, but we could do better. A lot of Scotland's railway lines haven't been electrified yet, such as the Highlands, Borders (Galasheils & Tweedbank), Fife, and anywhere north of Dunblane, Stirlingshire. It's not just this either, there are plenty of problems with our railway. Recent reports suggest that multiple journeys are still quicker by car, than train. This affects the whole point in sustainable travel, as it makes travel by train less appealing. We are seeing some light at the end of the tunnel though, as Scotland's railway was publicised as of April 2022, with the SNP promising this makes for a greener and more sustainable country. The goal is to have the whole railway decarbonised by 2035. We'll see how that goes...

Diesel-Hauled Train (43) Electric, Environmentally Friendly Train (385)



The same goes for buses too! They are a good solution to combat climate change, as they can hold many people in one vehicle, ultimately lowering the amount of cars on the road and reducing those nasty carbon emissions. Many people rely on buses for their everyday activities, whether that's going to work, school, etc. As of 2023, the percentage of Scotland's electric bus fleet was only around 16%. I must admit though, it is quite a lot of progress considering they've only been around for less than 5 years in Scotland. I know for a fact that bus operators could do better than that, especially if pushed to even more by the government. Public bus use has increased rapidly since the introduction of the Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme.

Over 65 million bus journeys have been made with this as of Spring 2023, with that number increasing every day. I, personally have made hundreds of journeys up and down the country, travelling on the first fully electric coach company in the world (Ember), to sitting on a crowded old bus up in Angus. This, however, has allowed and encouraged young people to ditch the car and get the bus to school, clubs or general leisure activities, eventually reducing carbon emissions. This is a very good thing that promotes public transport to young people. Again though, most buses still give out huge amounts of emissions. Transport by bus is also being discouraged by the huge amount of short-notice cancellations. This can end up in people being late for school, work, appointments, etc. This is one of the main reasons why people prefer to travel by personal car.

Another thing I should point out is overcrowding. This can be due to the frequency of bus services and/or the cancellations I mentioned earlier. Dunfermline City Electric Stagecoach Bus



The list of solutions could go on and on, and I wonder why it's taking so much time for action to be taken? Another one could be bus lanes in bigger cities. The use of bus lanes would mean bus and coach services can easily bypass traffic, ultimately resulting in faster journey times for bus users, and making public transport more appealing.

People point out that active travel such as cycling is the best solution to CO₂ emissions and city pollution. While local councils and the government are constantly creating cycle lanes (Which cause huge amounts of traffic meaning more standing pollution and frustration among drivers), I have observed in my local city how many people use them, and I can say it's not a lot. There can be a number of solutions to this problem, however. For example, schools could promote active travel by rewarding people who do so. But in the end, if the cycle lanes aren't going to be used, they should stop being made as this is a waste of resources and the vehicles/instruments used to make them pollute the air, for what reason exactly? It's just making the problem worse

It's not just Scotland that's experiencing these problems either, it's every developed country, and even some developing countries too. If governments get their act together and improve transportation, etc, it just might not be too late.

Why isn't more being done?

The main factor in why nothing is being done about this is the lack of government funding to local councils. In fact, more and more bus routes are being axed due to budget cuts all over the country. I fully believe that more money should be invested in our transport networks. It shouldn't matter about profits, it should matter about our Earth and what we're doing to it.

I hope this article has helped put into perspective the facts of Scotland's transportation systems, with the problems and solutions. I believe we can combat this 'climate emergency', but it all starts with you. (And the government)! If no action is taken soon, it will all come back to us in the long-term and it will not be good.

[No Progress In Decarbonising Scotland's Bus & Rail Fleet](#) - BBC News

[Several Journeys Still Faster by Car than Train](#) - The National

[Scotland's Railway made Public 2022](#) - SNP

[We aren't 'on track' to meeting the train decarbonisation targets](#) - Railway Technology

[Air Pollution in Scotland's Cities & Towns](#) - Sustrans

[Poor Public Transport Affects Economy](#) - Glasgow Times