

Councillor Angus Millar submission of 18 July 2023

PE1906/G: Investigate options for removing and reducing the impact of the central Glasgow section of the M8

Further to your letter of 6 June 2023, I am writing on behalf of Glasgow City Council to confirm our position with regard to the future of the M8, the critical role of Transport Scotland and the need for funding and other supports to be provided.

The details of our original letter and motion have outlined Glasgow City Council's position and intended approach which can be summarised as follows:

In our recent letter to you we stated:

- We recognise that the construction and continued presence of the city centre stretch of the M8 has had a profound impact on placemaking and the quality of the environment in central Glasgow, while acting as an important regional and national transport corridor in recent decades.
- We very much welcome the consideration of the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee of this issue. It is Glasgow City Council's view that this is timely, and that further engagement and research is required, involving national and local government, to further explore the future of the Glasgow city centre stretch of the M8.
- Glasgow City Council looks forward to further engagement with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to further consider what actions can be taken over the short term to mitigate the impact on the city centre of the M8; as well as medium- and longer-term exploration of the potential for more fundamental transformation of the city centre stretch with a view to reducing severance, supporting regeneration, and promoting sustainable transport.

- We realise that any longer-term radical change to this infrastructure would require detailed research to explore technical feasibility of any options, business case development and economic impact assessment, as well as transport modelling to ensure that any change is consistent with our national and city-level car km reduction objectives. While the civic conversation over the future of the M8 is a nascent one, we would appreciate early and continued engagement with all relevant partners with a view to securing a more detailed exploratory work in the coming months and years.

We have gratefully received your response, noted as follows:

At this point, the Committee is keen to further understand Glasgow City Council's plans to progress this work following the passing of the relevant motion on 30 March 2023. In particular, the Committee would like to know when the council intends to have a plan in place to progress work on this issue so that it can inform the Committee's consideration of the petition.

Our existing response, outlines our critical strategic and operational approach as far as the current local authority powers allow:

- Glasgow's Strategic Plan 2022-2027 to reduce the impact of the M8 on the city centre and to explore longer-term replacement options
- Glasgow's City Centre Transport Plan to achieve a 30-40% reduction in peak-hour private car traffic in the city centre by 2030 as part of wider commitments in the Glasgow Transport Strategy to reduce car vehicle kilometres in the city by at least 30% and to "offer a more liveable, people friendly urban environment [which] uses its space and streets differently".
- The significant investment, through the Glasgow City Region Deal, to begin that culture change toward people-friendly environments, such as the Avenues programme, and the new Sighthill Bridge which seeks to repair the connection between that area and the City Centre, and to provide safe, easy and sustainable access across the M8.
- Further to this Glasgow City Council prepared a Levelling Up Transport bid to cap the M8 at Charing cross which focussed on the potential benefits of such a project The bid highlighted the benefits to Regeneration, through place-making, place -mending, revitalising the area, creation of a new community asset, and stimulating the local economy.

- A committee paper will be brought forward in September 2023 setting out progress and specific actions, as well as identifying next steps.

Critically, recognising the M8 is a national asset, our approach from the outset has to be supported by Scottish Government and Transport Scotland as well as local government. We would therefore reiterate the following asks made of the Scottish Government by Glasgow City Council to underpin a collaboratively developed programme of actions:

- Consideration of short-term mitigations to address carbon emissions and air pollution within the city centre M8 corridor and consideration of a trial of lower speed limits within the city centre stretch of the M8;
- Scottish Government participation in and funding support for research over the M8's future in the short term, with commitment to more detailed transport modelling and business case development over the medium term;
- Transport Scotland support for transport modelling, business case development and identification of funding opportunities for the potential transformation of existing heavy roads infrastructure.
- Scottish Government support for an intensification of air quality monitoring within the M8 corridor.

On behalf of Glasgow City Council, the Council's Convener for Climate, Glasgow Green Deal, Transport and City Centre Recovery recently issued correspondence to Scottish Ministers, seeking to take forward a wide-ranging conversation over the future of the M8. This correspondence sought engagement to scope out actions which could be taken forward over the short, medium and longer terms to address the impact of the city centre stretch of the M8 and support its future transformation.

Return correspondence was recently received by the Council from the then-Minister for Transport, Kevin Stewart MSP, confirming his willingness for Transport Scotland officials and Glasgow City Council officers to hold initial dialogue with a view to scoping out any future discussion on this agenda. The Council now plans to engage further with Transport Scotland and the new Minister for Transport in order to reiterate the asks made of the Scottish Government and to take forward such a discussion.

Further to this, in the matter of funding, the Council notes that repair works and the propping up of the Woodside Viaduct alone will cost upwards of £100 million and last until at least the end of 2024 - one year and £65 million over original estimates.

Recent Freedom of Information requests have revealed that Transport Scotland are currently not assessing all immediate mitigation measures, including lower speed limits, which could address traffic volumes, air and noise pollution, as well as the number and cost of collisions. Therefore, we would suggest that the committee consider the current expenditure on the M8 repairs, in line with the asks above and seeks to consider if this should be balanced with investment in the necessary feasibility studies for the future of the M8.

Subject to further engagement with the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council will produce a paper in the coming months, to be considered by a Council committee, setting out progress on this broad dialogue with Scottish Government and identifying next steps and actions.

In conclusion, Glasgow City Council recognises the pivotal role it can play in committing to address the impact of the M8 on Glasgow city centre. We wish to stress our desire to work in partnership with Scottish Government and galvanise the efforts of all stakeholders, in particular Transport Scotland, as the owner of the asset. With their endorsement, funding and expertise; meaningful interim and long-term interventions can be tested, planned and delivered to the benefit of our residents and the broader population of Scotland.

I hope that the Committee will find this response helpful in their further consideration of the Petition.