# SNP rejects Conservative push to end what is called war on motorists in Scotland



Scotland is witnessing a contentious debate over transport policies, as the Scottish National Party (SNP) government rejects calls to halt measures perceived by some as punitive to motorists. The issue came to the forefront recently when the Scottish Conservatives lodged a motion demanding an end to what they described as an "anti-car" approach, arguing that such policies are unduly harming Scots already facing economic pressures.

The motion, debated and voted on in the Scottish Parliament, was rejected when the SNP pushed through an amendment maintaining the government's commitment to reducing car use to address environmental concerns. The vote ended with 64 in favour of the SNP's position to continue with these policies, while 52 supported the Conservative motion to cease what they termed a "war on motorists."

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Sue Webber criticised the government's stance, stating motorists are integral to the economy and daily life in Scotland. She described the government’s approach as "punitive," citing examples such as low emission zones (LEZs), lowered speed limits, regulated parking zones, widespread roadworks, and poorly maintained roads. Webber argued that these measures disproportionately impact "parents doing school runs, workers getting to jobs, tradespeople running businesses, and carers reaching the most vulnerable," describing the cumulative effect as an “insidious drip-drip” that makes life more difficult and expensive without offering viable alternatives. She called on the SNP to "stop viewing car drivers as bogeymen" and to reconsider these policies for the sake of connectivity and the economy.

In contrast, SNP Connectivity Minister Jim Fairlie defended the government's approach, rejecting accusations of a war on motorists as "reckless" given the broader environmental crisis. Speaking to MSPs, Fairlie emphasised the need for unity in tackling climate change and said that the government's policies are aimed at reducing transport emissions, "especially cars." He also highlighted that cars remain the most popular mode of transport in Scotland but that a shift is necessary to mitigate environmental impacts. Fairlie criticised historical Conservative deregulation of buses in the 1980s, which he claimed led to decades of decline in public transport options. He reiterated the government’s commitment to encouraging alternative modes of transport, including public transit, active travel (such as cycling and walking), and electric vehicles.

The debate comes amid official concerns over the government's climate targets. The SNP had to abandon an ambitious goal to reduce climate emissions by 75 per cent by 2030, previously touted as "world-leading." A report by the Auditor General and Accounts Commission warned that Scotland is unlikely to meet another target aimed at reducing car kilometres travelled by 20 per cent by the same date, citing a "lack of leadership." The report also raised questions about the return of peak-time ScotRail fares and the effectiveness of investments in free bus passes for young people.

Further measures under consideration include proposals to discourage the use of larger vehicles like SUVs by reducing parking space sizes and varying road charges and tax schemes according to vehicle size. These ideas were outlined in a "draft just transition plan for transport" released by the SNP Government earlier this year.

Fairlie defended existing interventions such as low emission zones, calling them "effective and necessary" to protect public health, despite criticism of their implementation. Scottish Labour transport spokesman Claire Baker acknowledged some validity in the Conservative criticism regarding the implementation of certain policies, such as the LEZ in Glasgow and the condition of roads, but cautioned against framing the situation as a war on motorists. She emphasised that the parliament is aligned in its goal to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

The debate underscores the ongoing tension between environmental objectives and the practical realities faced by many drivers in Scotland, highlighting divergent political perspectives on managing transport infrastructure and climate responsibilities.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-28-03-2024?iob=134819&meeting=15790> - This source provides details of the Scottish Parliament meeting on March 28, 2024, where the Scottish Conservatives debated the fair fares review and its implications for public transport and car usage in Scotland.
* <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-05-06-2024?iob=135817&meeting=15912> - This source details the Scottish Parliament meeting on June 5, 2024, where discussions included the state of Scotland's roads, the impact of roadworks, and the need for investment in road infrastructure.
* <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/scottish-conservative-and-unionist-party-debate-improving-scotlands-roads-june-5-2024> - This video captures the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party's debate on improving Scotland's roads, highlighting concerns about road conditions and the need for infrastructure investment.
* <https://www.scottishconservatives.com/policies/transport/> - This page outlines the Scottish Conservatives' transport policies, including their opposition to workplace parking levies and support for electrifying Scotland's railways.
* <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-05-12-2024?iob=137890&meeting=16144> - This source provides details of the Scottish Parliament meeting on December 5, 2024, where discussions included the implementation of 20mph speed limits and their impact on traffic and public transport.
* <https://transform.scot/2024/02/27/scottish-budget-2024-5/> - This article discusses the Scottish Government's budget decisions, including the cancellation of the Bus Partnership Fund and the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme, and their implications for sustainable transport initiatives.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14665507/Stop-punishing-ordinary-Scots-relentless-war-motorists-SNP-ministers-told.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data