

In the run up to May's local elections, it's important that candidates looking for your vote are challenged to set out what they would do to improve sustainable transport in your area.

In our report *Civilising the Streets*, Transform Scotland (in alliance with Sustrans Scotland) researched the factors that led to many cities across Europe becoming much more cycle friendly. Based on the findings of that report, we here offer some suggestions of commitments local political parties could promote in order to make Edinburgh a more civilised, attractive place.

## **Deliver high-quality cycle infrastructure:**

There needs to be a systematic expansion of both on-street and segregated cycle provision across the city. In short, we need to see full delivery of The City of Edinburgh Council's *Active Travel Action Plan*. The plan, published in April 2011, intends to "improve conditions on the existing cycling network" and "extend the coverage of the city's cycle network." The Council aims to have cycling make up 15% of trips made in Edinburgh by 2020, and in order to encourage the public to choose active travel, investment must be made.

## **Increase bicycle parking areas:**

Bicycle parking is lacking in the city, and could easily be integrated with already existing fixtures. Where bollards need to be installed, cycle racks are a good alternative (as seen, for instance, in the recent works on George IV Bridge). The city could also follow the example of Utrecht, where cycle parking is installed if five or more people request them in a certain area. This would also work to realise the pledge in the *Active Travel Action Plan* to increase cycle parking provision.

## **Deliver high-quality pedestrianisation in Edinburgh's city centre:**

If nothing else, the tram works on Princes Street have shown the potential for our Capital's main street as a tranquil public space rather than a noisy, polluted thoroughfare for traffic. Cities across Europe have transformed their city centres into much more enjoyable community spaces, reducing noise, pollution and congestion — but Edinburgh lags behind Dundee and Glasgow in this regard.



Photo by The Alliance for Biking and Walking — <http://flic.kr/p/EtGPx>

## **Implement a cycle hire scheme:**

Edinburgh should put in place a cycle hire scheme similar to the successful scheme introduced in London and in other cities across Europe. This would encourage active travel for people who do not own their own bicycle in the same way that car share schemes function.

## Transform Scotland's *Civilising the Streets* report

The technical measures needed to facilitate increases in walking and cycling levels have been studied in detail by numerous pieces of research into best practice in European cities. However, *the social and political conditions that led to implementation of these measures was seldom covered by the existing literature.* Transform Scotland, in its report *Civilising the Streets*, therefore focused on understanding the social and political dynamics that led to active travel investment in several European cities, and the lessons Scotland can learn from these experiences.

In several cities in the study, there was not an initial public demand for active travel investment. However, strong, sometimes visionary, political leadership led to investment. Once the changes were in place, the public appreciated the benefits and were supportive of further investment. This is likely because active travel strategies were based around improving people's day-to-day life: through increased safety, less car congestion, recreation opportunities, and air quality. This focus on 'quality of life' throughout the European cities led to tangible benefits for citizens, and an improved daily living experience.

In all cases, the investment in active travel was coordinated and implemented by local government, and this was important to ensure that the solutions implemented met local need. At a minimum cities had developed an active travel strategy, but in the best cases a full sustainable travel strategy that included all modes of transport had been developed. The study also found that financial support from the national government could be a vital factor in encouraging local government action or providing the means to implement local plans.

The *Civilising the Streets* report can be downloaded from the Transform Scotland website at [www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets-project.aspx](http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets-project.aspx)

# Local Leadership Needed to Reach Cycling Targets

The City of Edinburgh Council is committed to ensuring that 15% of all journeys in Edinburgh are made by bicycle by 2020, while the Scottish Government has committed the rest of the country to 10% by 2020.

Evidence from Europe shows there are no inherent barriers to increasing cycling rates in Scotland to these levels, but investment and strong local leadership are necessary. The geography of European cities with high cycling rates shows that weather and hills are not barriers to cycling. In fact, UK cycling levels in the 1950s were around 15%, higher than Germany's current level of 9%.

Local and national cycling targets are achievable. It is clear from drawing comparison with other cities across the continent that there are no insurmountable barriers – it is essentially a question of political and public will. What is needed are multi-year strategies to ensure well-directed investment, to stick with them, and to update and adapt the strategy as goals are met.

Scottish local authorities should develop travel strategies focused on **improving people's daily walking and cycling experiences**. These strategies need to **span several years**, be **visionary**, include clear **actions and goals**, and identify **funding**.

A focus on 'quality of life' will allow local governments to **provide opportunities** for the public, and it will be possible to communicate and implement a **positive vision of the future of personal transport**, instead of framing the discussion in terms of sacrifice and limitations. Ideally, local authorities should develop sustainable travel strategies that **put active travel in its wider context**, including spatial planning and other forms of personal and commercial transport.

These strategies **must recognise walking and cycling as essential in achieving targets for future sustainable economic growth**, health objectives and overall quality of life.

Bold vision and leadership on active travel, and effective communication of its benefits, are what is needed now. If local authorities cannot deliver this, it is fair to say that our political leaders will be shying away from making essential decisions that would lead to a more prosperous, happier and healthier Scotland.



# Key Requirements for Active Travel Success

## Leadership

- Local politicians need to provide strong, visionary leadership to develop, implement, and carry through a robust, comprehensive, and long-term strategy for active travel.

## Focus on the Individual's Experience

- To be successful, active travel strategies and long-term development plans must focus on improving the daily experience of pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities.
- Strategies should be based around enhancing the quality of life for the general population.
- Meaningful improvements must be made to the conditions for walking and cycling, with active travel consistently promoted over several years. This will lead to cycling and walking becoming normal and popular forms of transport in two to three years.

## Integrate Active Travel

- Ideally, a strategy for active travel should be part of an integrated sustainable travel strategy. This would consider active travel in its wider context, including issues such as spatial planning and all forms of personal and commercial transport.
- Conversely, long-term redevelopment and regeneration plans must be developed with pedestrian- and cycle-friendly

environments recognised as the core around which economic growth, public health, sustainability and overall quality of life are built.

- Active and sustainable travel should therefore be prioritised over individual motorised transport schemes and recognised for the wide range of Scottish policy objectives that they meet.

## Local, Lasting, Funded,

- Detailed strategies for active or sustainable travel must be developed at the local level.
- Funding programmes from central government play a key role in encouraging the development and securing the implementation of active travel strategies.
- Strategies for active travel must always span several years, with specific, meaningful actions and goals.
- It is clear from the cities in this study that to increase active travel rates, appropriate funding is required over multiple years to improve infrastructure.

## Best Practice Inspiration

- Stockholm can be seen as an example of how quickly appropriate action can change attitudes to, and increase use of, active travel in a city that started from a similar situation (or worse) to those in Scotland.



Stockholm. Photo by Jürgen Howaldt — [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stockholm-Gamla\\_Stan-2.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stockholm-Gamla_Stan-2.jpg)

# Sustainable transport makes economic sense

It's well known that walking, cycling and public transport are good for the environment — but Scotland is also missing out economically because of its over-reliance on unsustainable transport. If more people travelled on foot, by bike or by public transport, Scotland would have a significantly more productive workforce than it does now. Public transport is a very efficient way of carrying large numbers of people: cars carrying only one occupant are an inefficient use of valuable road space.

Our current transport system imposes massive costs on the economy. The rise of car commuting leads many people to waste hours each day sitting in traffic congestion. The decline in walking and cycling has been a major contributor to Scotland's horrendous record on obesity, placing a massive financial burden on our health service.

*Sustainable transport can help.* Greater investment in buses, trams, trains and ferries is clearly required if we wish to have one of the best public transport systems in the world. However, traffic problems may also be tackled through measures that reduce traffic levels. Small-scale, local interventions are often highly cost-effective. For example, Safe Routes to School projects and Workplace Travel Plans can reduce morning peak-hour congestion in a way that new large-scale road and rail projects cannot.

Most fundamentally, a move to a sustainable transport system would reduce our climate emissions and our dependence on oil. This will certainly help the environment, but would also help Scotland's economy.

## About Transform Scotland

Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport and freight by rail or sea.

We communicate the sustainable transport agenda to the media, politicians, local government, businesses and the general public, promoting the benefits of sustainable transport to all sectors of our society.

We campaign for a system of transport that:

- Reduces the need to travel
- Promotes more active travel such as walking and cycling
- Encourages a greater shift towards public transport – buses, trams, trains and ferries.

Most fundamentally, we want a shift to a sustainable transport system which would reduce our climate emissions, be accessible and affordable to everyone, improve our health and stop our dependence on imported oil.

We are a membership organisation bringing together rail, bus and shipping operators, local authorities, national environment and conservation organisations, and local environment and transport campaign groups. Transform Scotland also has individual supporters. We are a registered Scottish charity (charity number SC041516).



For more information on how you can join us and get involved in campaigning for sustainable transport in Scotland please visit our website: [www.transformscotland.org.uk](http://www.transformscotland.org.uk)