

Spokesworker is an occasional ("roughly monthly") news sheet, with stop-press news of forthcoming events, and of road, traffic and planning matters. It is not automatically sent to all members. A copy is enclosed if we are writing to you anyway, and copies are handed out at working group meetings. You can make sure to get a copy by sending us 10 or so stamped addressed envelopes. Spokesworker also appears on our Internet web site - to be notified of such updates by email, contact spokesATspokes.org.uk.

CANAL OPENING

The Union Canal towpath beyond Wester Hailes has recently been given a sealed surface, also with a link to Riccarton, funded by part of Edinburgh Council's 2009/10 CWSS grant. See the photo on page 4 of new Spokes Bulletin 107. Beyond that, surfacing has been continued out to Hermiston thanks to Sustrans funding.

You are invited to an official opening of Edinburgh's towpath surfacing, by **Cllr Gordon Mackenzie**, City Council Transport Convenor, at Wester Hailes Road bridge over the canal, at 2.30pm on **Monday 21 June**. Please email cycling@edinburgh.gov.uk if you can come, to give an idea of numbers and in case of changes.

TRAMLINE CRASHES

There have been several reports of tramline crashes involving experienced everyday cyclists on the Princes Street tramlines.

It might have been thought that most crashes would occur when a cyclist tried to turn across the lines (e.g. turning from Princes St into a side road). But there seems to be a particular problem when you are cycling *along* Princes Street and are then forced by circumstances to move sideways, thereby meeting the tramlines at a very bad angle and without much time to think.

If you stay in the main kerbside lane you avoid this danger. Maybe that was the expectation: but it means delay behind buses at stops, or in queues at busy times, thereby losing one of the main advantages of getting around by bike, especially in peak hours.

Therefore many cyclists are using the central lane, often cycling between the tramlines, so as to move along Princes St at a reasonable speed, and not be stuck behind buses. During a recent 15-mins observation, 4 cyclists used the kerbside traffic lane, 3 were cycling between the tramlines and 2 (who were policemen on bikes) were between the central island and the tramlines!!

For time saving, and a clear run along Princes St, going between or near the tramlines may make sense, particularly if you have fat tyres. But whether or not it does make sense, many people will do it anyway. However, there are two problems. *First*, even fat tyres can skid on a tramline and, *second*, you can feel forced by circumstances to move sideways at short notice – for example a bus moving out, traffic pressure behind, or seeing cobbles ahead.

The crash reports here have been copied to us by experienced cyclists who were unexpectedly caught out by such reasons...

CRASH REPORT 1

I want to report an accident that I had on Princes Street on 22 Feb 2010. I hadn't known about this way of reporting it until now.

I am an experienced cyclist, aged 47 and cycling continually since I was a child, in London, Edinburgh and Manchester. I am very confident in traffic. This was not the first time that I had cycled along Princes Street with the tramlines.

Cycling east to west along Princes St I found myself forced into the tramlines near the foot of the Mound where the lanes narrow.

With buses to my left and heading to the West End I thought it best to continue between the tramlines and avoid crossing them. Unfortunately there was a blockage further along (about opposite Debenhams, I think) and I had to turn into the bus lane. I thought I had taken a steep enough angle but obviously not – as I crossed the tramline something happened and I was on the ground with a bus just past me and one not far behind. It stopped as I leapt out of the road. Although the damage was in the end not too bad, it could have been fatal had the bus driver not stopped quickly.

I suffered cuts to my face and wrist, bruises to my leg requiring first aid when I eventually reached my destination; also ruined jacket and trousers and damage to the pedal and other parts of my bike. Total cost of the crash at least £150, plus my own injuries.

Princes St is now impossible to cycle along. The bus lanes are dangerous, as the buses are constantly moving in and out at bus stops. The tramlines are dangerous even for experienced cyclists, as above. But Princes Street is essential in traversing Edinburgh.

I live near Leith Walk, cycle it daily, and need to cross Edinburgh East to West at least once a week. I am very concerned about provision for cyclists on these stretches of road. Cyclists need to be provided for – we are natural allies of the trams.

Can you please reply to confirm that this accident has been logged in your records?

CRASH REPORT 2

I am at home recovering from a nasty bike crash yesterday (Monday 31 May) caused by the tram lines on Princes Street. The Spokes site have indicated you are recording such incidents.

I was travelling east on Princes St in the outside lane about 8.50am when I approached the cobbled area before the Mound/National Gallery area (just by the demo tram).

To avoid the cobbles (?why do we have cobbles here?) I went to move over into the inside lane. However in crossing the tram lines my bike completely went from under me and I crashed onto my back and side on Princes St, narrowly avoiding being run over by the oncoming Lothian Bus (the driver was a great help to me).

I have suffered some substantial cuts to my legs, arms and back some of which required stitches at my Doctors yesterday. I was thankfully wearing my helmet which saved further damage.

I find it hard to understand why there are no signs on Princes Street warning of the dangers that the tram lines clearly present to cyclists. I also find it madness that there is a stretch of cobbles in the middle of Princes Street which appears to be of no benefit than to make a cyclists life even more dangerous.

I am an experienced cyclist who rides 40-50 miles a week – but I have not been on Princes Street for some time – and by the look of my legs and back at the moment, will avoid doing so again.

I think you need to seriously consider the risks you have created here – people's lives are at risk – mine nearly was.

REPORTING TRAMLINE CRASHES

If you have a tramline crash (or any tram-related) crash, please do report it via the official reporting line, as below. Even if it was a few weeks or even months ago, please do report it.

This is vital so that the tram developers and council get a picture of what is happening and how serious it is, and think seriously about measures to improve things. Just to give two examples – the promised **consultation on Princes Street future** is expected to include an option for a segregated bike route on one side of the tramlines – this is more likely to be agreed if crashes are getting reported under the current layout. Second, **cobbles** have resulted in at least one tramline crash (above). They are proposed at some other tram stops – but crash reports could help get that changed.

Whether or not you've had a crash, if these issues concern you contact your councillors [www.writetothem.com]. Councillors will take the final decision on the future of Princes St after the consultation.

For more info, including **how to report a tramline crash**, go to www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress and look at **downloads – public transport – tram**. Our **advice note on tramlines** is also there.

ON YOUR BIKE

FOE Fife Coastal Challenge 2010 – September 5th 30 or 50 mile sponsored rides for FOE Scotland, starting/ending Leuchars, including the coast down to Anstruther. For more info see www.foe-scotland.org.uk/bikeride or phone Zoe 0131 243 2713.

Brompton users local group – for local rides/events, socialising (and technical chat?!) See www.meetup.com/Bromptonites.

FIND A BETTER WAY

The £750,000 Climate Challenge Fund project being undertaken by the Bike Station and partners (including Spokes) is now well underway – as in the 4-page supplement in Spokes 106.

Operating under the slogan *Find A Better Way To Work*, the project has already signed up 85 Edinburgh companies with a total of over 12,000 employees, and more are joining all the time.

Companies and individuals are offered big support to help reduce car use: free cycle training, loan of bikes (including some very popular electric bikes), free trial bus passes, walking and cycle maps, car club membership and advice on ecodriving are all available. For further details see www.findabetterwaytowork.org.

Scotland's first **Cycle Challenge** took place in May as part of the project with 2000+ people from 121 workplaces, including 258 people who hadn't cycled for at least a year. Companies competed for who could log the most cycling and attract new or infrequent cyclists. *We congratulate the first-prize winners in each organisation-size category: The Scottish Parliament, Jewel and Esk College, Analog Devices, Renewable Devices Group, Helixion Ltd & Benjamin Tindall Architects*.*

For full results and details of two more challenges to take place in Edinburgh later this year, see edinburghcyclechallenge.org.uk.

*Ben Tindall himself, a Spokes member, will be assisting Spokes as an expert in the judging team for our exciting summer competition – see entry form downloadable soon from www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress.

SPOKES STRUCTURE

Spokes is this summer planning to consider the pros and cons of applying for charitable status, and/or becoming a company limited by guarantee. At the same time we will review and update the constitution – this is necessary not only for the above possible changes, but also because some aspects of the present constitution are no longer in line with our actual practice.

Spokes has never been registered as a charity, but this option has become easier and more attractive in recent years due to changes in the rules. However, it is not a clearcut decision – the benefits of charitable status (including qualifying for Gift Aid and reduced costs for map copyright fees) need to be considered carefully against the additional administrative requirements that would result, bearing in mind that Spokes is a volunteer organisation with limited capacity. We rely heavily on the personal motivation of our more involved individuals, whose interest is in improving cycling conditions rather than being involved in more bureaucracy than is necessary to these aims.

We will include further updates in future Spokesworkers, but if anyone has comments, or useful experience to offer from other organisations, please contact spokes@spokes.org.uk or 313 2114.

We also hope to develop our Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs] web page to provide info on how Spokes operates.

LOCAL GOODIES

A Spokes member has contacted us to point out several small developments which make his cycling life easier. His initiative in congratulating those responsible is an excellent example to us all!!

1. *"The Asda in Leith Docks is easily accessible by bike from Hawthornvale Path. It has until now had a measly 6-element bike rack, located a long way from the south entrance. However, Asda are to be congratulated on the recent addition of 12 racks slightly closer to the entrance. I have personally complimented the management of Asda, which comment was well received. The location is apparently controlled by Forth Ports and not as near the door as da management would have liked. I urge concerned local Spokes members to take this up with Forth Ports."*

2. *"Some sections of very bad (for cyclists) road surfacing have recently been fixed – to an excellent standard. One was opposite the Western General in Crewe Road South, the other was Carrington Road (past Fettes) which, for a long time, has been badly fissured. The latter is a useful east-west link connecting Inverleith Park to Craigleith Hill Ave/Groathill/Roseburn Path. I must try and get round to congratulating my councillors."*

CONSULTATIONS

Please send in your comments on any of these that concern you, and copy your comments to Spokes.

Water of Leith Management Plan – ends 18 June

See www.waterofleith.org.uk/management. Or, see paper copies at Leith/Stockbridge libraries and Waverley Court [Council HQ].

Delivering Capital Growth – ends 25 June

See edinburgh.gov.uk then search for 'delivering capital growth.' Includes future planning and transport issues and their integration.

Strategic Development Plan for Edinburgh & SE Scotland – ends 27 Aug www.sesplan.com/consultation.

MIDLOTHIAN

David Wardrop-White represents Spokes, Sustrans and CTC on Midlothian Access Forum, and he reports there are plans to create (probably this year) the first 1.2km of what could become a Loanhead-Shawfair-Edinburgh cycleroute. David commented to Midlothian Council, *"We strongly support the proposal to create a cycleway/walkway from Loanhead to Straiton Pond (approx 1.2km) on the former railway line. We believe this will offer a high-quality, safe and attractive route for existing cyclists and will encourage those new to cycling, particularly young families, in the Roslin-Loanhead-Straiton area, to "give it a go". We also see this development as an essential stage in the longer-term opportunity to connect Roslin and Loanhead with Shawfair and the city of Edinburgh, thus opening up the possibility of safer cycle commuting between Midlothian and Edinburgh."*

If you have thoughts on this, or any issues for Midlothian Access Forum, contact dwardropwhiteATyahoo.co.uk. 07802-948461.

CYCLINATION: NOV 6

On 6 November Edinburgh hosts the autumn Cyclination/CTC conference, at the City Chambers. The event will attract activists from cycle campaign groups all over the UK to see what is happening in Edinburgh and Scotland and discuss effective ways to encourage cycling and persuade local and national government to deliver on their commitments. Spokes members will be most welcome to attend – a full programme will be announced soon.

Cyclination [www.cyclination.org.uk] is the UK umbrella body for cycle campaign groups. It publishes a bimonthly newsletter and organises twice-yearly conferences jointly with the CTC.

The event is organised by Spokes, with CTC Scotland, other Scottish campaign groups, Edinburgh City and Cycling Scotland.

The previous conference [April] was in **Portsmouth**, which has a **city-wide 20mph experiment and reallocation of parking space along the seafront to make way for a new cycle route**.

The 20mph scheme has reduced accidents and attracts attention UK-wide as a demonstration of how lower speeds can work across an area. Initial police opposition has softened and the experiment seems to have gained widespread public support.

Loss of car parking space on the sea front in favour of cycling has been more controversial, and the battle rages in the letters page of the local paper as Portsmouth Council considers whether to extend it the full length of the seafront.

Even without these two examples of radical traffic management, it was obvious from the amount of coloured lane, cycle signage and shared pavements in the city centre that cycling is gaining serious attention in Portsmouth. As well as improving facilities, Portsmouth is also promoting cycling through a Change4Life campaign, with great ideas such as a *student competition* to design cycle parking stands, a *Love Your Bike day* and a *Famous Figure Cycle Ride*, visiting the birthplaces of celebrities such as Charles Dickens, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Peter Sellers. See the conference presentations at pompeybug.co.uk/conference/programme.

To offer help for the Edinburgh conference: contact rosie.telford@gmail.com or leave a message at 0131 313 2114.

Help needed includes: accommodation for delegates who want to stay with local cyclists, and help running social events and weekend rides. A ceilidh will be held on Saturday evening.