

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.

FOR YOUR DIARY

See diary in Spokes Bulletin 112. Also...

ELECTION MEETINGS...

As discussed in Spokes 112 [p3] please lobby candidates for the May 3 council elections. One opportunity is at public meetings...

Morningside Peace & Justice Group meetings with party reps, 10.30-11.30am, The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road

Mar 7 Melanie Main, Green party [and Spokes member]

Mar 14 Elaine Aitken, Conservative

Mar 21 Jenny Dawe, Lib Dem [and Council leader]

Mar 28 Eric Barry, Labour [sorry we missed SNP, was Feb 29]

March 29 Spokes Election Forum [time, place and details in Spokes Bulletin 112 and in Feb 18 news item at spokes.org.uk].

OTHER MEETINGS...

Mar 15 Tenements: Energy Efficiency 7.30pm at Cafe Camino, St Mary's RC Parish Centre [near bottom of John Lewis, Picardy Pl.] For tenement dwellers and community groups: how to cut fuel bills & carbon emissions. Includes short tenement **bike storage** talk by Spokes member **Kim Harding** [who has himself applied for one of the Council's secure onstreet parking pilot projects].

Mar 29-30 Global Policy Dialogue on Sustainability & the City Joint University of Edinburgh / British Council event to start an extended dialogue about our future urban existence. Academic event, but "welcomes participation from civil society, government and commercial folk." More details and registration form at... <http://sustainability-and-the-city.eventbrite.co.uk>.

Queries: Jake.Broadhurst@ed.ac.uk [Ed Uni International Projects]

Apr 28 Cycle Rallies in London and provisionally Edinburgh for more government attention and funding for cycling as a means of transport. See 'Cycling Manifesto' article for more background.

PRINCES STREET

'CYCLIST DISMOUNT' SIGNS

Large *Cyclist Dismount* signs have been placed in Princes Street beside the empty traffic lane adjacent to the pavement during the current tram works, thus deterring people from a hugely convenient route for shopping and for crossing the city centre – as well as feeding prejudices about 'illegal cycling.'

A Lothian and Borders Police representative, in his monthly report to New Town and Broughton Community Council [6 Feb], said these official-looking signs have no legal force.

The Broughton Spurtle newspaper [www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk] says, "They are thought to have been erected by tram contractors and represent wishful thinking." We checked with reporter Alan McIntosh, who told us, "It was spontaneously said by the Lothian and Borders Police spokesman as part of his monthly report. I took notes and am very happy to be quoted as the source."

PRIMARK – NO BIKE PARK

Bulletin 112 includes a Princes St photo [caption 'No bike park'] outside Primark, showing a bike locked to a pole. Although a light-hearted caption inspired by the rhyme, it led to a member of the public reporting that planning permission for Primark had included a bike parking requirement (under council policies, this is standard for new developments) – but this had not been implemented and Primark had been 'let off' by the council. We have not yet checked this out, but there have also been past rumours that the streetscape section of the Planning Dept has scuppered other previous Princes St bike parking proposals.

Our informant also said Primark promised to 'support' parking in Rose Street - but with no date given for installation. However, planning application conditions surely should mean Primark *paying* for this, not just *supporting* it, and ensuring it is installed when the store is opened, not some unspecified future date.

If you shop at Primark, ask your councillor why the store has not yet been required to install bike parking, in line with council policies requiring bike parking at new developments.

PRINCES STREET FUTURE (PARADISE?)

Spokes has already reported the great December situation when Princes Street was free of all motor traffic and all tramworks, and open only to walkers and cyclists. See our reports and photos in Spokes 112 [p4] and the Dec 7 news item at spokes.org.uk.



An article in the Herald [31.12.11] – extracts below - speculated on whether this was a sign of things to come in the future, and included very positive quotes from top council officials. **Despite the optimistic tone of the article, Spokes investigations suggest that the future is far from clear, with various factions within and outside the council probably pushing for different futures.** Some, we believe, are also sceptical about whether there is any significant role for cycling at all in Princes Street's eventual layout.

Last year's Gehl Report [spokes.org.uk : documents : local : Edinburgh : Princes St] was very positive about the role and value of a bike-friendly Princes Street, but we feel there have been mixed messages from officials [see Spokes web page above]. Also, consultation on the future has been promised for several years, but nothing has happened. This was doubtless in part due to the tram uncertainties, but it probably also reflected differing views.

Now we suspect everything is again on hold until after the May 3 council elections - the future will depend on the views of the new councillors and controlling party. Please lobby your election candidates about the kind of Princes St you want.

Herald article: [NB the full article, by Damien Henderson, Transport Correspondent [31.12.11] is at www.heraldsotland.com/news/transport/council-reveals-plans-for-princes-street-makeover.1629698.]

Council reveals plans for Princes Street makeover

[NB: Despite the Herald's headline, the council had *not* issued any plans!]

Council officials in Edinburgh are to press ahead with a gradual pedestrianisation of Princes Street. The dramatic plan hopes to transform the capital's most famous thoroughfare ahead of trams being introduced in 2014. It is also hoped the move will help the capital rival Glasgow as a major shopping destination.

A number of measures, including temporary traffic closures to tie in with the August arts festivals and the installation of vending kiosks, are to be given a trial to gauge the public's response and attract interest from visitors, officials have told The Herald.

However, more radical and potentially controversial measures, including making Princes Street and nearby George Street open to one-way traffic only and reconfiguring the bus network so as to reduce dramatically the number of "through" services that criss-cross the city centre, are also being considered.

The latest measures flow from a blueprint by Gehl Architects in 2010 to transform Princes Street from a bus-dominated corridor with dilapidated shops and narrow pavements to a tourist destination in its own right with a booming cafe culture that takes advantage of one of the most picturesque backdrops in Scotland.

It follows a trial pedestrianisation in the run-up to Christmas which used a traffic embargo put in place for tram work to widen the area of the winter festival programme, normally held in Princes Street gardens and add a number of tourist attractions.

Dave Anderson, Edinburgh City Council's Director of City Development, said he hoped the momentum created by the winter festival could be maintained in the New Year as a number of one-off closures of both Princes Street and George Street are planned.

"Following the Gehl study we found we were pushing at an open door. Businesses said they wanted to see trial pedestrianisation and the results were quite positive."

Despite attracting far more tourists than Glasgow and boasting some of the most stunning urban scenery in the UK, Edinburgh lags behind its western rival as a shopping destination. One of the key factors in Glasgow's success is thought to be the Buchanan St pedestrianisation, which began in the 1970s and eventually led to the Buchanan Galleries shopping centre two decades later.

Problems identified in the Gehl report include the high number of buses using Princes Street, up to 600 an hour in peak periods, and the lack of space in which pedestrians could meet or linger.

However, rather than moving towards full pedestrianisation once trams begin, Mr Anderson said the council was pursuing a "shared space" policy allowing pedestrians to mingle with slow-moving traffic, with dedicated cycle lanes next to an expanded pavement and faster taxis and trams in the middle of the street.

Similar changes have been introduced in cities as far apart as London, New York, Melbourne and Sydney and made areas dominated by traffic more attractive to pedestrians.

One option would be to continue to allow buses along Princes Street until 10am, when traffic restrictions would be imposed so as to make it more attractive to tourists and other visitors. Similar changes were introduced to the Royal Mile a decade ago.

The council is also looking at eventually terminating more bus services at the edge of the city centre, and introducing regular "hopper" services connecting the New Town to the Old Town.

Riccardo Marini, council design leader, admitted the plans were likely to meet resistance. *"About 10 years ago lots of people were saying you can't make the changes planned for the Royal Mile. In the 1970s people said you couldn't pedestrianise Buchanan St, that it would destroy the street. Wherever this has been done it has had a profound economic impact,"* he said. [End of Herald article]

SOUTHERN ARC

Council intentions for the 'Southern Arc' [Haymarket to Holyrood, including the Royal Mile, Chambers St, and parts of Tollcross] are very positive on cycling. The full report is item 8 here.. www.edinburgh.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2660/planning_committee

The Spokes role in commenting on this 'area development framework' is complimented in the report to councillors: *"Spokes input through attending design workshops and response to the draft has been very helpful in identifying gaps/issues in the cycle network and in developing the project proposals."* Spokes in turn thanks Sustrans and individual Spokes members who also responded to the consultation when we notified members about it.

The proposals were highlighted in a Herald article – extracts below. [Full article at www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/death-rates-prompt-new-traffic-plans.16877850].

Herald article: Death rates prompt new traffic plans

Brian Donnelly, Senior News Reporter, 29 Feb 2012

HIGH death rates in Scotland's capital have prompted plans for an overhaul of traffic. Mortality rates in Edinburgh's Old Town and parts of the west end are higher than the average for the entire city and the Lothians. Previous attempts to reduce city-centre pollution, including plans for a congestion charge, have failed.

Now – after the revelation of high death rates for these areas, the city council will put together new plans for reducing traffic, with a complete review of the one-way systems, and a rethink on how pedestrian crossings work.

The so-called Southern Arc, which runs from Haymarket to Holyrood, has been identified as having a high mortality rate that could be reduced by better health care and environment. In the Southern Arc, the rate of deaths from 2004 to 2010 that "could theoretically have been averted by better health care" was 160 per 100,000, compared to 115 per 100,000 across the city and 112 per 100,000 across Lothian, a difference described as "significant."

A report to be presented to the council states: *"The data suggests the health of people in the Southern Arc is poorer than the city or Lothian average, across a number of indicators. This is unexpected given the area's deprivation profile. Poor air quality is directly related to health problems. An increase in average levels of small particles is associated with an increase in mortality. Road transport is responsible for about a third of these particles. This is higher in parts of the Southern Arc, where the combination of high traffic volumes and the canyon-like effect of tall buildings and narrow streets trap exhaust emissions."*

The council has identified areas for improvement, including the route from Haymarket to Holyrood, the Haymarket area, Chambers Street, The Royal Mile and Tollcross. The route would include prioritising pedestrians and bikes over cars, changing one-way systems in the Lothian Road area, and a vehicle-free access from the Grassmarket to the Union Canal. The Royal Mile would have greater restrictions on cars. Tollcross and areas towards the canal could have widespread pedestrianisation.

A spokesman for heritage watchdog the Cockburn Association said: *"Encouraging more people to walk and cycle will have broader societal benefits than just improved public realm, but this must be balanced with city centre businesses."* [End of Herald article]

Stop press: Also Mar 5 Ev News report: www.scotsman.com/edinburgh-evening-news/massive-city-centre-traffic-shake-up-approved-1-2154163

ROYAL MILE

The Royal Mile forms part of the Southern Arc, but separate council discussions here seem to pay less attention to cycling issues and options – though the Council's Royal Mile web pages refer to the Southern Arc report. For more details, click through the various links at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/RoyalMileProject.

If you have ideas for the Royal Mile ask your councillors and election candidates to raise your points [www.writetothem.com].

CYCLING MANIFESTO

A group of cyclists in Scotland, associated with the Cycle Embassy of Great Britain [www.cycling-embassy.org.uk], is drawing up a Cycling Manifesto. A mass ride in support of the ideas is being considered for April 28 - the same day as a mass ride is planned in London, following the Times #Cyclesafe campaign.

The Scottish manifesto's 8 headline points are...

- 1) Proper funding for cycling.
- 2) Design cycling into Scotland's roads.
- 3) Slower speeds where people live, work and play
- 4) Integrate cycling into local transport strategies
- 5) Improved road traffic law and enforcement
- 6) Reduce the risk of HGVs to cyclists and pedestrians
- 7) A strategic and joined-up programme of road user training
- 8) Improved statistics supporting decision-making and policy

Each point is then discussed in more detail. Item (1) uses Spokes research in the following text...

"Cycling is booming in Britain and said to be worth £3 billion to the economy. But while in the Netherlands some £10-£20 per head is invested in cycling, in Scotland it is nearer £2-£3. In England the best achieved was the 2005-2011 Cycling City and Towns project, which invested around £10 per head and achieved significant growth in everyday cycle use. The Scottish government should invest 5% of its £2bn annual transport budget in active travel (cycling and walking). This is exactly in line with its own 'Low Carbon Scotland' proposal for £1.32bn over 11 years, and with the per-head cycling-only figures above. Scottish local authorities should invest, from their own internal transport budgets, a proportion at least equal to their existing commuter cycling modal share, as the City of Edinburgh Council has done."

Anyone wishing to see the full draft manifesto, and for more on the April 28 ideas, contact Dave Brennan, email magnatombdb@netscape.net or sallyhinchcliffe@gmail.com. Some of the ideas are also at... www.kimharding.net/blog/?p=1760