

To: members of TICC Committee

From: Dave du Feu, Spokes

## **Re: TICC Active Travel Inquiry, Evidence Session Tuesday 26 January 2010**

Having read the above evidence I would like to make a couple of comments on the evidence from Phillip Darnton of Cycling England and from the Minister.

### **STEWART STEVENSON**

#### **a. Existing levels of funding per head**

It was not clear what figures the Minister was using in quoting a range between 8p and £1.35p per head local authority cycling investment in Scotland. This does not tie up with our own survey results, at least for our most recent 08/09 survey in Spokes Bulletin 104. In particular, Midlothian came out above average rather than bottom! Our figures suggest an average expenditure per head across Scotland from all sources of just over £3 per head [(added later) of which around £2.50 per head is spent in or with local authorities]. We can only assume that the Minister's figures exclude a variety of the sources.

#### **b. Relationship between investment and outcome**

The Minister laid huge emphasis on an apparent lack of correlation between the above investment levels and outcome, presumably in terms of cycle usage. This conclusion seems very seriously flawed, indeed probably completely spurious, for several major reasons.

- i. As the Convener pointed out, the levels of spending quoted, 8p to £1.35, are so low that they are unlikely to result in significant relative impacts - when we see that the English cycling towns and Europe talk of needing £10-£20 per head - indeed the Minister quotes £22 per head cycling investment for those parts of Scottish towns covered by Smarter Choices!
- ii. The spending figures quoted by the Minister cannot be the total local authority cycling investment - indeed they probably represent well under 50% of the total - see (a) above. Yet any correlation against outcome must surely be with total investment, not just with one element of it.
- iii. Evidence from Europe makes it clear that consistent investment over a period of years is important to achieve high cycling levels. The Minister appears to be using one year's figures.
- iv. Perhaps most important, outcome was not defined by the Minister. Is he talking about the actual level of cycling in each area or about the increase/decrease in cycling? Any correlation to find the impact of investment should be with the increase/decrease, not with the total of cycle use! Yet his one example, school cycling figures, gave totals. Looking at past censuses, levels of Scottish cycle use are traditionally higher in small-town rural areas (e.g. Moray and Highlands which he quotes) than in the cities or industrial central belt. Such pre-existing levels of cycle use are likely to completely swamp the effect of one year's investment of between 8p and £1.35p per head, if the correlation is being made with totals rather than with increase/decrease.

#### **c. Regional Transport Partnerships**

The question posed by Charlie Gordon was excellent. The evidence from our 08/09 funding survey [Spokes Bulletin 104] suggested that there were two main reasons why cycling investment fell seriously in Scotland that year, each meaning a net loss of around £2m. First, the transfer of capital

funding from RTPs to councils had a net effect of reducing cycling investment by around £2m across Scotland. Second, Sustrans funding was cut drastically in order to fund Smarter Choices - another net loss to cycling investment of around £2m, given that only one-third of Smarter Choices is cycling investment - the rest being eco-drive, car-share, bus, walk etc - so Smarter Choices is in effect a transfer of funding from walk/cycle to walk/cycle/bus/car-share/eco-drive.

## **PHILLIP DARNTON**

We support most of Mr Darnton's evidence, and have considerable admiration for the DfT's funding programme for cycling towns and cities. We note that the DfT also funds a Sustainable Travel Towns programme, comparable to our Smarter Choices, whereas we have no equivalent to the DfT Cycling Towns initiative.

However Spokes has to take issue with Mr Darnton's comments on cycle lanes. There is of course some truth in his comments, but he takes them to an extreme which is far from the feedback from our 1000 members. Mr Darnton's views tend to be shared by some more experienced cyclists, but are a source of considerable controversy within the cycling community. I comment on two of his remarks...

"Motorists then drive extremely close to the dividing white line (of the cycle lane) and they drive very fast."

This presumably is based on John Parkin's research. That research in fact showed that motorists drive slightly closer when there is a cycle lane on a 40mph or 50mph road (not extremely close) and found no significant difference on a 30mph road. John Parkin also points out that a motorist is reluctant to cross a white line - so in our view it is arguable whether there is any real impact on safety or on perceived safety from the 'closeness' effect. Nor am I aware of research suggesting that motorists drive faster when a cycle lane is introduced - indeed some local authorities cite traffic calming and speed reduction as one of the benefits of cycle lanes, as the lanes considerably narrow the motorists' effective carriageway width, whilst pedestrians also comment favourably on the increased distance of traffic from the pavement.

"People who do not cycle will tell you that they would cycle if there was a secure or, better still, segregated cycle lane. Once people start to cycle, they realise that cycle lanes have a host of problems attached to them and are not, in many cities, the ideal solution."

In our experience, and based on considerable member feedback over many years, the widespread coloured onroad cycle lanes in Edinburgh have been highly influential in encouraging more people to cycle - and they are also much appreciated by most users EVEN WHEN they become experienced cyclists. I can assure the Committee that if Edinburgh Council proposed to remove its existing onroad cycle facilities there would be a riot! If you would like more concrete evidence on this, I suggest asking Edinburgh Council what sort of feedback it gets when it consults on schemes such as their recent consultation on the road out to the new Infirmary - did even one single existing experienced cyclist, let alone novices, suggest the lanes be removed rather than improved?

Of course, there are problems with cycle lanes, and in residential areas for example a 20mph zone is often a better solution. And, as with anything, as you become more experienced you notice problems, but that in our experience leads to calls for improvements rather than for scrapping the lanes.

Finally, European experience (e.g. the Pucher paper highlighted in our submission) suggests that cycle facilities - onroad where appropriate as well as segregated - are a vital element of a successful long-term cycling strategy.