

AN E MOBILITY POLICY FOR EDINBURGH

Spokes response to the City of Edinburgh Council Electric Vehicle Framework

Introduction

We welcome the Council's intention to ensure a co-ordinated approach within the Council and the City to the move to Electric Vehicles (EVs). We strongly agree with the comments on page one that *'We do not believe that electric vehicles will resolve Edinburgh's congestion issues. Continued investment in walking, cycling, and public transport is vitally important.'*

The Council must keep this front of mind as it continues its investment in transport. EVs are not a panacea to the environmental and health problems caused by motor traffic powered by petrol and diesel. They occupy the same amount of space on the road as conventional cars and the construction of EVs and the electricity which powers them will continue to generate substantial carbon emissions. There will also continue to be some atmospheric pollution from tyres and brakes and the toll of accidents from collisions etc is likely to continue and may even get worse because of the lack of engine noise. Only a radical switch to active travel and public transport can make a serious impact on these problems

Secondly, the EV Framework as currently conceived is far too narrowly focussed. It should be widened into an **E Mobility Framework** which would include ways of encouraging shift from fossil-fuelled vehicles not just to EVs but also to e bikes and cargo bikes.. We set out some specific suggestions below.

The provision of EV charging infrastructure

The current consultation paper focuses largely on the provision of EV charging infrastructure. Although SPOKES does not have a direct interest in this topic, we would be concerned if the funding of EV charging points created an indirect subsidy for motorists that might have the effect of increasing motor traffic and associated congestion. From this perspective we have the following specific comments:

1. There should be a standard tariff as proposed and a quick move away from the provision of free electricity. The standard tariff should be stepped up over time so that although there is an incentive to switch to EVs at the outset, charges should be increased to offset all the costs including maintenance and management costs.
2. Any on street EV charging points should use existing parking bays rather than newly created bays. They should be provided on side streets and not on main routes. In the first instance, priority should be given to Car Club users.
3. Off street EV charging points should not be at the expense of cycle parking or obvious spots for the expansion or improvement of cycle parking.
4. Although it would be reasonable for resident parking charges to be reduced for EVs based on the same principle as currently applies i.e. varied according to the level of emissions, we would not favour lower charges for EVs for public on-street parking.. This would simply encourage EV owners to use their cars for travel to work and city centre shopping and, therefore, increase car use and congestion.

Encouraging the use of e-bikes including e-cargo bikes

E-bikes are very similar to conventional bikes in appearance and function but they also include a small, battery powered engine. They are not simply a low powered moped or motor bike as they are designed to be cycled in the normal way with the engine providing support on hills and against adverse winds. By law, the engine alone does not have sufficient power to take the bike over 15 mph. E-cargo bikes are a special kind of e-bike designed to carry goods or children.

E-bikes have considerable potential for expanding active travel. They are attractive to older people who wish to continue cycling and to people who are just deterred from cycling by the prospect of hilly terrain. They also make commuting feasible for much longer journeys than would normally be the case for conventional bikes. E-bikes are also attractive for cycle touring and mesh in well with the trend towards environmentally sustainable tourism.

There is a growing trend, locally and nationally, towards use of e-bikes, as shown by sales figures. This should be encouraged by the Council as part of an e mobility policy – particularly with respect to shift from car to e bike for local trips.

Cargo bikes can be used by businesses for moving goods within the city without getting ensnared in traffic. They both reduce congestion and make sense on business grounds particularly for close deliveries and deliveries in the city centre. They can typically carry up to 100 kg and also tackle hills. Widespread use of cargo bikes could make a contribution to reducing pollution and congestion in the centre of Edinburgh.

Cargo bikes can also be used to carry small children and are an effective way of transporting children to the local school and, therefore, reducing the congestion caused by school runs.

As with e bikes, there are already pioneer users of cargo bikes in Edinburgh, including some small-scale opportunities for cargo-bike hire. This trend should be recognised and fostered by the Council as part of an e mobility policy.

In our view the Council should consider the following measures to encourage the use of e-bikes / cargo bikes.

1. The creation of a centre of expertise on e-bikes/cargo bikes in Edinburgh to provide independent advice – Sustrans might be an obvious candidate to provide this centre of expertise advice. This could include advice on funding, such as the [Low Carbon Transport Business Loan](#) from the Energy Saving Trust. Information and experience is also available from Europe, for example see the link below:

<https://ecf.com/files/wp-content/uploads/CYCLE-LOGISTIC-internet.compressed.pdf>

2. Encouragement to provide e-bikes for hire, and publicity for any bike shops that do provide this, for example, in tourist literature. We understand that Sustrans will lend cargo bikes for a short period of time to suitable businesses and there is limited cargo bike hire from Harts Cyclery and Edinburgh Festival of Cycling. E Bike hire is already available from Cycle Scotland (an Edinburgh business, despite its name) whilst Edinburgh E Bike Experience offers both e bike rental and tours of the city.

3. More secure, protected on street parking for e-bike owners in flats (e-bikes are heavier and, therefore more difficult to take up stairs in blocks of flats than ordinary bikes and they will often be more valuable);
4. Consideration of the need for battery charging facilities for e-bikes at offices, community centres, sports facilities and libraries (most e-bikes will have detachable batteries which can be charged away from the bikes themselves).
5. Loans for small enterprises and individuals to acquire cargo bikes (we understand that the Energy Savings Trust already has a loan scheme but this is not available for start up businesses or for individuals).
6. Encouragement to offices and other businesses to provide e-bikes for use by staff. In particular, Edinburgh Council should take the lead in showing what can be done, with a small fleet of e-bikes and cargo bikes for Council use. We have been told that the Council has bought several e-bikes which are largely unused because of a supposed need for "training" However, in fact they are very easy to use and require only a brief familiarisation in addition to normal cycling skills.
7. All Council transport needs (for example internal local deliveries and collections) should be assessed for possible use of cargo bikes rather than motor vehicles.
8. All DIY stores and stores selling bulky items should be encouraged to offer Cargo e-bike rental as we believe is already the case at Homebase at Craighleith.
9. Revision of planning estimates of feasible commuting distances and associated targets for cycling to take account of e-bikes.
10. Cycle facilities such as offroad paths should cater for cargo bikes – for example chicanes can be problematic, especially if the barriers are too closely spaced.
11. More restrictions on the use of motor vehicles for deliveries in city centre locations to encourage the use of cargo bikes.

It should go without saying that all measures to provide more safe space for cycling, including protected cycle lanes on main roads, would provide an incentive to e-bike.

SPOKES Planning Group

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