

## **Spokes Holyrood Election Hustings, 23 March 2011**

Sarah Boyack, Labour candidate for Edinburgh Central

### **Introduction**

She outlined three ways in which investment in cycling helps the 'bigger picture' also:

1. Helps make low carbon lifestyles a reality. Road congestion is still a problem and two thirds of trips are less than two miles.
2. Supports public health policy. Cycling addresses sedentary lifestyles and is a cheap and easy way to get healthy.
3. Recession. Cycling is a cheap way to get people around.

Cycling is not the most expensive form of transport. Relatively small amounts of money, possibly from different sources, can make a difference.

She will argue for 10% of journeys by bicycle by 2020.

Infrastructure needs to be improved. She mentioned potholes and cycle lanes as areas to improve in. The aim would be to create a safer environment. At the moment people do not feel safe. We should create space for cyclists and make cycling normal.

Bicycles should be made part of longer distance travel also, for example by integrating it with trams and trains. Off road routes across country should be supported. Encourage employers to sign up to bike initiatives and schools to get involved. Local initiatives such as the Climate Change Fund could be used to get children more involved in cycling.

### **Q & A:**

Group 1:

Q: How do we change the culture of transport departments? A: They need to be persuaded by government priorities. Could get the chief planner to have an award for cycling/recycling. Free thing to do. Not just about money, it is about a culture change. Get one planning authority to win a prize and others will follow. Use political leadership to change the culture.

Q: Is it now in the planning rules that flats have to have cycle storage? A: It is not always enforced. For years developers have provided fewer car parking spaces than they should. Spokes could campaign on it.

Q: Your party supports the Forth Road Bridge. The old bridge could be used for other things. Other speakers say it will remain open. A: You are right to be afraid about how the bridge will be used. Could generate traffic. Just doubling the capacity is not good for carbon emissions.

Q: You voted for it to go ahead. A: We were not able to scrutinise the contract and did not vote for that. I cannot think it will come in on budget. We would be lumbered with that contract if we get in. It is a difficult issue, we accepted evidence about 'fitness for purpose' that said we needed a new bridge. My view is we need to increase buses and trains also. We would reregulate buses. We are the only party to support that.

## Group 2:

Q: Driving test should have a cycling module, even if this is simulated, otherwise some people drive in a way threatening to cyclists. A: If you have been both a driver and a cyclist, you get a better perspective. Spokes could campaign on this. She suggested lobbying your MPs.

Q: What have you heard from the other candidates tonight that you would like to steal? A: Carbon budgeting. STAG appraisals should have carbon included in them. Need to get people to sign up to things like that while in opposition as well as in government.

Q: What is your view on 20mph? A: I made it legal. Transport Act 2000 allows it as part of creating a pleasant environment.

Q: Current 20mph leaves out major roads. A: Part-time cycle lanes should be made full-time. Consider lobbying politicians to join together to lobby others, such as the police.

Q: There is talk of a planning barrier to rational development. People are doing things as they've always done it. How do you change that? A: Political leadership. Encourage people to change, such as using Scottish Environment Awards. Tell the chief planner to have a special award. Decision makers are mostly males in their 40s-50s. There is a need to get decision makers changed mid-career. In the last four years, we have had central planning guidance. Result has been no space for recycling or bikes in new housing.

Q: What level of investment will you put into cycling? A: More than now.

## Group 3:

Q: Is Scottish Parliament's funding to councils for cycling ringfenced? A: Funding is pretty much lumped together. There used to be a public transport fund which was eligible for cycling and was ringfenced for cycling. Local authorities hated it. They like to be able to move money around. Now, there is a notional amount of money. Ringfencing is not now really working.

Q: What will happen if Labour wins? A: Trying to get all my colleagues to sign up. Do not know who is going to be Minister. Also, could be a minority government or coalition.

Q: The current government has cycling policies and aspirations but they are not funded. There should be encouragement of auditing and scrutiny of Transport Scotland who are not interested in cycling. A: Most engineers do not consider cycling as transport. It is not just for leisure, it is a mode of transport.

Q: There is a census question on travel to work. What will politicians do with this information? A: Depends on the wording. I cycle to work once per week and aim for twice per week. If the census question does not allow me to answer like this, there would be underreporting of cycling.

Q: Why can politicians not see the benefits of cycling? A: Households with bikes - almost all have them are where there are kids. Safety is fundamental. Need to involve schools and get more children cycling.

## Group 4:

Q: Fresnel lenses can be fitted to lorries to remove blind spots. They cost around £3. Would this be something you would consider and what are your other cycling safety views? A: I have not heard of Fresnel

lenses but something I would be happy to be emailed information on. Presumably the lorry companies are not interested. Could try rewarding the companies that use them. On safety generally, what stops people I know from cycling is not feeling safe, particularly women. Cycle lanes should be full time, part time ones are unpredictable. Advance stop lines are good to help cyclist visibility. Could reengineer the road space. Give people off road cycling experience and publicise routes they can take.

Q: With advance stop lines, you find cars in there. Need to look at how it is policed. Also, have 20mph speed limit. A: Legislation could be used. Reduce speed limits due to the environment.

Q: Safety is a massive issue but the emphasis is on cycle training not poor, aggressive motoring. There should be more police involvement and punishment for aggressive drivers. A: On policing, would suggest Spokes lobby politicians post election to lobby the police. We meet with them every six months. Get all the parties involved.

Q: There won't be more money so where will more investment for cycling come from, what angle would you use? A: The money is there, you just have to instruct it to be used. It is how you use the money that counts.

Group 5:

Q: What can politicians do to counteract the bad image cycling has? A: When I was criticised, I toughed it out. Emphasise the good things that are impossible to disagree with – health, independence for children helping the environment. Make it easy for people, not a requirement. Change the cycling environment. London is still congested but there are more cyclists now, a lot of them using the new bikes. Look for new ways to build political consensus. Ask politicians what they would do in opposition as well as in government.

Q: How much 'joined up' thinking is there about the long term savings to the health service from cycling, for example by making people fitter etc? A: it is a lot easier to decide to do things in opposition. In government, there are different government departments. There needs to be political to hold the new government to account or get the opposition to state what they would do. Cycling is justified on health grounds, but the health department won't lead on it. Transport would have to lead on it. Spokes people could try to influence this. Could get all the MSPs together to lobby the police on enforcement of things like advanced stop lines for cyclists.

### **Conclusion:**

I have enjoyed the Hustings and been floored by a couple of things. One idea to come out of the discussions would be to get together the Lothian/Edinburgh MSPs and get us to do work to lobby the police. We meet them every six months. Could incorporate cycling issues into Lothian Health discussions also, we meet them quarterly.

We can change attitudes and culture. If organisations think politicians are interested in something, they will take notice. Planning awards could be used. Money is crucial but you can do things cheaply.

Lobby the government but also the opposition. When in government, it is harder if the opposition are not supporting you. Lobby us all after the election. Labour are committed to cycling, hopefully it will be committed to the 10% by 2020 target.