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# *Spokes Public Meeting: Understanding Cycling*

24 March 2014

*Speakers:* Prof Colin Pooley (Lancaster); Cllr Andrew Burns (CEC, Council Leader)

*Chair:* Mies Knottenbelt (Spokes)

## **Colin Pooley (CP)**

Report of Study based in Lancaster and Leeds, Manchester and Oxford.

*Aim:* to provide evidence to back up policy decisions.

*Problems:* lack of sustainable urban travel – too much traffic/car use; unsuccessful attempts to increase cycling; why Brits don't respond to sustainable initiatives. Wide recognition of need to be sustainable, but these good views don't translate into actual behaviour – a 'gap'. Sustainable travellers are a minority.

*Focus of research:* short, everyday, urban, utility trips. Historical data: 90 life history narratives; q'aire, 1400 responses; 40 interviews; 40 accompanied journeys; 20 ethnographies. Cross-section of the population. Spatial analysis of urban structure. How do people make everyday travel decisions?

What makes everyday cycling (un)attractive? Need to learn from the past. Currently (2012) cycling is about 2% of journeys; walking about 50%. Elsewhere in Europe, cycling is 18% (DK), 26% (NL), 10% (D).

Cycling peaked in 1930s – seen as convenient, flexible, cheap, independent. Pub transport less available then; and smoking on top deck! Dislikes of cycling: need to look smart at work; weather; parking at work – risk of theft. 1960s – cars became cheap; originally seen as for leisure; then for work – same advantages as cycling earlier – convenient, flexible, independent etc; also dry, and lockable.

Views of cycling in 21stC – positive for health, environment, less so for enjoyment, where walking scores higher. 3 key influences:

1. physical environment – risk, safety are big concern;
2. household/family constraints – too busy; easier to bundle kids into car than kit them for cycling; reliance on car to fit everything in;
3. perception of 'normality'; car is the norm, cycling, walking "eccentric", "odd".

Neg perceptions of cycling even in Lancaster, a cycling-friendly town. Regular cyclists usually single or no kids. Where to put bikes? – storage a problem. In communities where cycling is more the norm, people are happier to do it. People want their kids to cycle, but see it as too dangerous on roads.

Hence, changes needed: make car harder for short trips; make it feel abnormal; make cycling easy, safe, comfortable. Sounds anti-car, but it's against USE not OWNERSHIP.

*Making cycling easy* – local circumstances determine best approaches; separated cycling routes on arterial roads; restrictions on speed, parking and access on residential roads. Adopt Strict Liability – it makes drivers more careful. Change structure to make cycling easy, make storage/parking easy. Economic change – flexi hours; change image of cycling to make it 'normal'. Re-allocate road space; make all 1-way streets 2-way for cyclists. Building regulations – re storage. Land use – ensure amenities accessible by cycling. Multi-agency approach needed – health, planning, companies, pressure groups

## **NOTICES from DdF**

1 National cycling budget rising from 1 to 1.5%, but way below Euro standards, and set to fall again in 15/16. Many reasons for the rise, including media/political influence of PoP, so is important to attend PoP2014.

2 Cllr Jim Orr thanked for his contributions (warm applause). New transport vice-chair Cllr Adam McVey; cycling responsibility possibly to be shared between Cllrs Lesley Hinds (Transport Chair) and Adam McVey.

## **Andrew Burns (AB)**

Likes what CP has said; thinks Edinburgh moving in right direction even though long way to go. Was recently in Cologne, Munich, realises how far ahead they are. In Edinburgh cycling to work has doubled, from 4 to 8%, in last 8 years. Target 15% by 2020 achievable but needs much work.

CEC's initiatives include –

- off-road routes (canal, Meadows)
- re-allocation of road space: George St trial, and Leith Walk
- Street Design Guidance out for consultation, and this will be important to respond to
- 20mph: already nearly 50% of residential streets have this
- Storage – on-street trials happening – needs to expand
- Strict Liability has to be tackled at National Gov't level
- Definitive measures of cycling use to be in place by 2015.

## **Question/Answer Session**

Q Are we talking about journeys to work, or modal share?

Q CEC policies are OK, but how can implementation be speeded up?

Q Can Cycle Team deliver strategy, let Neighbourhood Teams deal with road works – dropped kerbs etc?

Q why are main roads to Cameron Toll not included in 20mph limit?

A: quote from Local Transport Strategy, CEC to produce draft network of roads for speed reduction to 20mph, for consultation, this summer.

CP: important to get priorities right – put cycling-friendly infrastructure in place before measures to promote cycling; and more enforcement, eg of parking regulations.

Q condition of road surfaces is unacceptable. Roads are used by all, so why should resurfacing not come from general transport budget?

CP: it's false to separate road users – many cyclists also own cars. Their research showed most people aren't committed to travel mode, are tolerant of other modes, people are flexible – would change if conditions were right.

Q does price of fuel have direct effect on car usage? CP it's not a main driver. There's been a drop in young drivers – cost of taking test, and of insurance. But still strong aspirations to drive.

Q Paris cycle hire scheme – has it led to cycling being perceived 'normal'? A. yes to some extent. And there's been re-allocation of road space there, and more to come.

Q why are we so low in the European league? CP political leadership, money on infrastructure; politicians here in awe of roads/oil lobbies.

AB: an update on hire scheme for Edinburgh is promised – Glasgow getting one! Extra money for cycling already having effect, eg North Meadows Walk rebuild.

Q What is CEC doing to discourage car use? AB: attempt at congestion charging failed, but issue won't go away.

CP: sustainable travel is viewed positively – no fear that politicians will lose seats over it. There's a disconnect – politicians have positive view of it; so does the public; but politicians THINK the public are not in favour of it.

Q pollution zones are increasingly a problem – is campaign to show car use as anti-social possible? CP: congestion charging (in London) is becoming 'carbon charging' because low-fuel cars are being let off. AB: pollution hotspots need to be better publicised – few know about them.

Q likes red colouring of cycling lanes, but new method (chipping) isn't properly red – why? AB: agree, will report back. CP thinks coloured surfacing is useful but isn't enough to encourage cycling.

Q Can re-surfacing be used as opportunity to put better cycling facilities in?

Q might segregation make cycling look even more risky elsewhere? CP possibly, but benefits outweigh this.

Q what is the Study's No.1 recommendation? CP: car-free zones in city centres – gives a destination for walking and cycling. AB likes carfree days, and mentioned Slateford Green as local example of carfree activity.

Q Can more use be made of the Jan Gehl Report? AB: once George St is up and working, we can have another look at Princes St; but won't be easy – too many vested interests.

The speakers and audience were thanked, and meeting closed 9.30pm.

Notes by Peter Hawkins