

SURVEY ON EDINBURGH RESIDENTIAL BIKE STORAGE

Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign

www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress

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Introduction and Methodology:

Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, was awarded Climate Challenge Funding in May 2010 for a project to look at how individuals and groups might achieve practical improvements in bike storage for tenements and flats – in-flat, in-stair, backgreen or on-street. Based on some fieldwork by TPi Consultants to look at the practical issues in Edinburgh (including planning, management and legal issues, as well as the hardware options) and possible solutions, we are developing information and guidance materials for use by individuals, stairs, developers, councils and others who are looking for the best way to accommodate bikes for every-day use. We hope this will be a starting point in stimulating actual practical storage improvements to help and encourage people to use bikes for their routine local journeys.

A short survey (10 questions) was designed to support the progress of this project. Most respondents completed the survey online (using SurveyMonkey), between 19-30 September 2010, during which time 100 responses were collected. The survey was promoted via the Spokes news-sheet (Spokesworker), Spokes website and Twitter (with re-tweets by various organisations as well as email forwarding by recipients). Greener Leith included the survey link in its e-bulletin, and some forms were completed at the Spokes stall at the Painting Edinburgh Green event. Thus participants will be self-selected for an interest in this issue - and it was notable how quickly responses came in.

The survey was not designed as a scientific survey but more as a tool to inform future action by Spokes as part of its Climate Challenge Fund project to tackle residential cycle storage constraints for tenement and flat dwellers in Edinburgh. The SurveyMonkey tool used also meant that there was a limit on the number of questions that could be asked (as well as a need to keep the survey short), which constrained how much information could be gathered – e.g., we weren't able to ask about the type of accommodation (traditional/new-build, number of residents etc.).

Significant proportions of respondents gave postcodes in EH6 and EH7, and also EH3, EH9, and EH10 (areas of high residential density).

For more information on the project go to ...

<http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/downloads/technical-and-research/spokes-tenementsflats-bike-storage-project/>

For any queries / follow-up comments, please email spokesbikestorage@tusks.org.uk.

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

SUMMARY

“No storage facilities in flat, and would be unable to keep in the stair. Would love to have a bike!”

- Cycle storage is a significant problem for many tenement/flat residents in Edinburgh – the majority (86%) said it was inconvenient to some degree. Nearly a third said that storage problems stopped them from cycling as much as they’d like. Only 14% of respondents said that they didn’t experience difficulties. Furthermore, over half of respondents – taken to be generally sympathetic to cycling and bike storage – found other people’s bikes to be a problem where they lived too.
- The majority of respondents try and store their bike indoors, somewhere – outside parking overnight is not seen as viable given weather, risk of theft, vandalism etc.
- Residents in new-build developments also experience storage problems, despite design standards etc.
- The survey results point to strong interest in tackling storage problems in order to be able to cycle more, suggesting that tackling storage could have a substantial impact on city cycling levels. 40% left comments about using their bike more if problems were resolved.
- The vast majority of respondents (92%) said that clear practical information on possible bike storage solutions (in-flat, in-stair, backgreen or on-street) would be of interest. 85% said they would discuss options with neighbours/ other stairwell residents with a view to collective action (in stairwell/backgreen/on-street); 41% said they would look at buying equipment etc to make practical improvements within their own home. 52% said they would lobby councillors / others to take action on behalf of residents.
- There seems to be significant interest in tackling problems in a more systematic, collective way, to provide quick, easy access to secure, dry storage, at ground-level or on-street. *Will the Council, landlords and developers join tenement/flat residents in real positive action on this?*

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESULTS

1. IF YOU HAVE A BIKE, how often do you use a bike for your everyday activities such as travel to work / study, shopping, visits, commuting, etc?

The majority of the 100 respondents are regular / frequent cyclists (unsurprisingly, given the survey promotion method, though people were invited to pass it on to both cycling and non-cycling friends and family too.) 58% cycle most days; 24% cycle once or twice a week. Only 2% never cycle.

2. Where do you normally store your bike?

The majority of respondents store their bikes inside somewhere, though as the survey shows, with significant problems in many cases.

- 45% said “In flat stairwell”;
- 34% said “In house / flat”.
- 5% said “In separate shed / garage / own garden”.
- 3% said other: stair cupboard / our building (a new build) has a bike store / In cellar of tenement,
- 6% said “Outside on-street” and 5% said “Outside in shared garden”.

3. Do you have any problems storing your bike at your home?

The majority of respondents experience some level of inconvenience or problem with bike storage, with nearly a third being prevented them cycling as much as they would like to.

32% said “Yes - it's awkward and stops me using my bike as much as I'd like”.

54% said “Yes - it's awkward but I still use my bike” – though it should be borne in mind that a high proportion of respondents will probably be highly committed cyclists (e.g., Spokes members) and as such will endeavour to carry on despite hurdles. [NB It was not possible to identify which respondents were existing Spokes members.]

The survey results point clearly to the scale of the problem at the wider scale: Edinburgh is a city with a high proportion - 60% - of all Edinburgh households living in tenements, and much higher proportions in some wards (source: 2001 census), as indicated in the table below.

Travel to work data for these areas suggests there is a long way to go if it is to meet the CEC Charter of Brussels target of 15% of journeys to work by bike, and tackling residential storage is integral to progress with this.

(from 2001 census)	Meadows/ Morningside	Leith Walk	Southside / Newington	Fountainbridge / Craiglockhart	City Centre
population	33330	25322	32094	21084	22340
number of dwellings	14760	14930	10941	8190	11454
% of dwellings in flats/ tenements	78.4	88.2	75.2	73.3	92.9
% bike to work	4.7	2.5	4	2.9	2.4
% car drivers to work	18.3	17.4	13.8	20.7	13.7
% car passengers to work	4.3	3.6	4.6	5.1	3.3
% walk to work	27.8	21.1	31.1	17.7	33
average household size	2.3	1.8	2.1	2	2

69 respondents made additional comments on the problems they experience (indicating the degree of interest in tackling the storage issue, if such a high proportion felt moved to make additional comment), summarised in the bullets below (for the full list of comments, see the annex).

- Inadequate space indoors. Too many bikes, also prams etc.
- Safety issues – bikes are stacked and fall down.
- Can block stairs and backgreen access. Problems moving large items around (e.g., removals, deliveries)
- Damage to bikes (spokes, cables etc) from crowding; risk of injury to people; chipped paint; dirt on floor / clothing from mud / salt in winter.
- Damage to bikes if left outside – rain, vandalism.
- Theft is a huge problem – particularly if bikes are left outside but also within stairwells (stairwell doors may not be closed or locked properly).
- Stairs are a problem – too many, especially if shopping / children to manage. May be curved, or too narrow to carry a bike safely.
- The hassle of extracting / storing a bike means that bikes are far less likely to be used for ad hoc trips, particularly shorter distances (the bike will only come out when the alternative is worse!!)
- Unused / abandoned bikes take up space, and may encourage dumping of other stuff too.
- No space for visitors' bikes [people's homes are trip destinations for others, of course]
- Complaints from / conflicts with neighbours (e.g., if residents consider a landing or space 'theirs' given proximity)
- Pressure from landlords / factors to remove bikes
- Nowhere to clean or maintain bikes

Limited street-level storage is a real problem for families, with obvious negative implications for initiatives aimed at encouraging cycling as transport for the next generation too, whether as passengers on parental bikes or in becoming independent cyclists in due course.

Some illustrative quotes...

“There is not enough secure storage for my bike. I will still use it but it puts me off. I just moved to live on the 3rd floor and if I have to carry it up to my flat to make sure it's safe I will stop cycling.”

“There's nowhere ideal to lock it downstairs so I have to carry it up three flights of stairs plus whatever I'm normally carrying. I could lock it downstairs but I would be constantly worried about its security so it ends up safely locked on the third floor and I use it less often because of this.”

“The bikes take up a fair amount of space in our small flat and we live on the top floor, so it's a long hike up! But there is no place else to put them.... the stairwell is small and always full of bikes and leaving bikes outside just isn't an option.”

“I've had experience with other flat owners complaining about there being so many bikes in the stairwell to the point where the council got involved and forced tenants to remove their bikes. This was a conflict which would not have happened had there been designated storage space for bikes.”

And in relation to new-build flats

[NB - it wasn't possible to distinguish between residents in traditional tenements and newer developments]

“Our building (a new build) has a bike store downstairs. It's badly planned and it's very difficult to get the bike in and out (it has 2 doors at an angle from each other - one of which apparently is a fire door), and you then still have to manoeuvre the bike through the front door that opens at another angle from the direction of the bike store. The room is small and lots of people who don't use their bikes often have them stored on a pile. If more people were to actively use their bikes it would be even more difficult to use the bike store.”

“While a bike store was built as part of the development C.2000, there are more bikes than the store has capacity for - cycling too popular? Store too small?”

4. If you said that problems storing your bike affect your use of it, would you use your bike more if your problems were solved? If so, please describe how.

40% of respondents left comments expressing strong interest in tackling storage problems in order to be able to cycle more, suggesting that tackling storage could have a substantial impact on city cycling levels. In essence, residents need quick, easy access to secure, dry storage, at ground-level or on-street.

Some illustrative quotes...

“If the bike was stored (securely) either at the foot of the stairwell or outside the building then I think I'd be more tempted to use the bike for my everyday journeys. Also if the storage had a locker area for your accessories/waterproof clothing, this would help greatly.”

“I would use my bike more if it was more easily accessible.”

“Absolutely. In my previous flat in Edinburgh, I was the only one who had a bike and I could easily roll it in, lock it, and roll it out. Now I find myself using it less and less because of the hassle of getting it out of the small area where all the other bikes are stored.”

“Yes. If the bike was outside, easily accessible, and ok to be left in a state that I could use it immediately [some people find they need to remove wheels/saddles etc] I would use it a lot more. My flat is on the fourth floor so again, carrying up and down, with shopping, work bag etc. etc. puts me off. ... Essentially, like car users, if I could get going within a matter of seconds/minutes that would be perfect.”

“If I had a safe place to store my bike at ground level I would be far more active and could get more done in the day.”

And of course there are other issues that need to be tackled too...

“Yes - I'd use it for some journeys where there was a safe cycle route (your maps are great by the way). The lack of safe cycle routes is a larger barrier to use in general.”

**5. If you do NOT currently have a bike... would you have problems storing one at home?
If 'yes', please outline the problems (briefly)**

10 said 'yes'. (However, given that only 2% were non-cyclists, presumably some respondents were answering with flatmates / partners etc in mind.)

Some illustrative quotes...

- *I don't have room in the flat for it. My neighbour stores hers on the stairway outside my door (which is fine by me) but there's not enough room to store another one and people couldn't get past if I tried. We've had bikes stolen from the bottom of the stairwell and they wouldn't last in the back garden either. We do have a large metal storage container at the bottom of the stairwell but it's too small for bikes.*
- *My bike was recently stolen from a railing near my flat, I had complaints from the neighbour about storing it inside on the ground floor, possible solutions thought of were to have a bike hoist like in Dutch houses. This would keep the ground floor clear and fire risk down whilst not needing to carry the bike 3 floors up each time. Another solution is a bike rack inside properly mounted.*
- *Already one bike and a desk on the landing shared between two flats, so definitely no more room for another bike. Inside the flat there's no further storage for a bike either.*
- *No storage facilities in flat, and would be unable to keep in the stair. Would love to have a bike!*

[NB In the Scottish Executive's *Cycling in Scotland 2005* report, Table 2.12 shows that 5 percent of houses with no cyclists gave "I don't have anywhere to keep a bike at home" as a reason for not cycling (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/17105205/3>).]

6. If you do NOT currently have a bike, would you get and use one on a regular basis if it was easy to store at or near home?

Only a very small number of respondents (2) currently don't have a bike. There were 2 answers to 'yes - rather than use the car', and one to each of 'yes - rather than walk' and 'yes - rather than bus' (probably reflecting different choices on different days etc.)

7. [Whether or not you have your own bike] Do other people's parked bikes at home cause you any trouble?

52 % said 'yes', other people's parked bikes cause problems.

The respondents, as largely regular cyclists, might be expected to be sympathetic to cycling and cycle storage, yet over half of them feel inconvenienced by bikes whether their own or other. This suggests that bike storage is very definitely a real problem for tenement / flat residents in the round.

Furthermore, a significant number of people referred to unused / abandoned bikes, which is another issue which might make a real difference if somehow tackled systematically. Tackling abandoned bikes might be easier than providing new storage in a good number of cases. The Bike Station are able to respond to reports received on abandoned bikes (collecting them after following specific steps to try and identify / find the owner etc), but would a systematic programme be worth investigating (e.g., something that tackles all stairs in an area, or placing notices inside doors etc, rather than just relying on individual initiative to take action, when the knowledge may be lacking on possible options e.g., the Bike Station's scheme).

Some illustrative quotes ...

"There is a bit of space at the bottom of the stair which could probably be really well used for vertical storage of bikes, but there are two bikes locked up there covered in dust- I think the owners have long since moved away."

"All the bikes are piled in different corners and the majority are not used, so they occupy spaces available for usable bikes."

"One of my neighbours attaches his bike to the railings on the second floor of my stairwell. Very easy to get around it if you aren't carrying anything. As soon as you try to get something past i.e. shopping, when I had a washing machine delivered, it all becomes a bit tricky."

"Difficult to get around narrow stairwell anyway, with other bikes locked to the railings, makes more difficult because the bikes get caught on each other."

"If anyone else at home had a bike I would not have room."

"Not enough space for all the stairwell's bikes."

"My tenement stair is missing three supports for the banister near the bottom because thieves have kicked them out to steal bicycles attached to them. It's already not safe for toddlers, and won't be safe for anyone if another one goes, but it's really difficult to ensure that people (especially visitors to rental flats) don't park there."

8. Would clear practical information on possible bike storage solutions (in-flat, in-stair, backgreen or on-street) be of interest to you?

Encouragingly, given the aims of this project, 92% said “Yes”!

9. If you had this type of information on tackling storage, what might you be interested in doing next?

Again, a high level of interest in taking practical action, particularly on a collective level – perhaps reflecting a strong feeling that in-flat solutions will have limited applicability really (especially for those in high-turnover rented accommodation – students etc) and a greater impact could be made by action at the neighbourhood level.

There is significant demand for quality (reasonably secure) on-street bike storage (as opposed to bike parking provision in the form of Sheffield racks, useful though those undoubtedly are for visitors, shoppers etc.

- 85% (n=75) said yes to “Discuss with neighbours/ other stairwell residents with a view to collective action (in stairwell/backgreen/on-street)”
- 41% (n=36) said yes to “Buy equipment etc to make practical improvements within your own home”
- 52% (n=46) said yes to “Lobby your councillors / others to take action on your / other residents’ behalf”

88% of respondents replied positively (i.e., choosing at least one of the options above), and many left comments. During the course of the survey various comments were made that suggest that many people have been thinking about a wide range of ways to be able to cycle more easily more often, e.g.,

- Get an old ‘utility’ bike that’s relatively unattractive to thieves, rather than an expensive new one
- Use a folding bike
- Hang the bike over stairwell railings with straps
- Use pulley hoists in the hall
- Install rings etc in the stairwell floor / walls to lock bikes to
- Store bikes vertically [with brackets / racks]
- Wall-mount bikes near entrances
- Improve the storage arrangement of bikes to make better use of available space

Some other verbatim comments:

“... people don't have a bike at all because there is no secure, accessible and dry storage.”

“Security is the main issue. Myself and my partner have had several bikes stolen, and theft attempts from our stairwell, so I would want to know how to store our bikes in the stairwell (or perhaps in a joint storage area somehow) securely.”

On collective solutions:

“If we had a means of securely parking our bicycles on the road (like cars do) this would reduce the barriers to cycling. ... No-one expects motorists to carry their car up and down stairs. Secure on-road parking for bicycles would take up considerably less space than a car and would help give the message that cycles were a recognised form of transport.”

“I don't particularly know my neighbours and I live in rented accommodation so for me the best action would be if larger community bodies for example the council realised there is a demand for more safe bike storage and provided that for its community. You see enormous bike sheds in other cities across the world but nothing like that in Edinburgh. I am sure if the city provided better bike storage facilities you would see a rise in people using bikes (it is fairly common sense) and whilst I understand there are many other projects needing funding from the council I think it would be money well spent to invest in long-term safe bike storage across the city, especially around residential areas as the common flats in Edinburgh do not have enough space for bikes to be stored in them.”

“I've seen on the internet that some European countries have hi-tech bike storage which takes up little space and keeps the bikes secure from thieves and from the weather (automated stacking systems). While it would be unrealistic to expect these city-wide, it is time for such solutions to be examined and introduced in certain areas of Edinburgh.”

“If Edinburgh is to be a cycle friendly city, this issue must be addressed.”

“We have good cycle storage in our tenement but it's constantly full - often with bikes that never seem to be used. If we could have secure, or at least covered, cycle storage in the city centre/near residential areas, so that there is more space for storage this wouldn't be such a problem.”

“Our flat is too small to hang bikes, I've done that previously (though not in a tenement flat). As a family we're keen cyclists (two bikes and a tandem), but i almost never use my own bike these days due to a combination of the storage problem and coping with a toddler on the stair. We're thinking of moving flat, but the nicest place we've seen has no ground-level storage at all, not even for a buggy - the backgreen is accessed down steps and there is no other way of reaching it. Bike storage in tenements is a significant problem for a lot of people.”

“It can be really difficult for people in rented housing to make changes to their accommodation, particularly younger tenants - including students, but plenty of young professionals are also affected) who tend not to stay long-term at one address - often because the landlords and agencies who let to them provide a poor service. if you plan to move on in a year or so, you don't want to spend lots of money on improvements or hassle your landlord to do the work (or even to give you permission to do the work yourself)”

On on-street storage:

“There really isn't space for cycle storage on the back green or in the stairwell, if there was we have used this solution before now. In my street we really need on street parking.”

“On street lockers required as stair and access to backgreen too small for storage and too difficult.”

“The new flat development next to my block has a great outdoor cycle cage for the residents there. The block I'm in doesn't have a garden. But, there is a lot of space outside where bike lockers/cage could be placed on the main street or even in a section of the small play park that isn't used.”

“I like the Tollcross Energy & Carbon Saving group's bike rack scheme, and would be interested helping our community group (Transition Edinburgh South) to partner with Spokes to offer our local residents a similar offer.”

On paying for improvements:

“I would pay to use a locker of some sort at street level.”

“If there was an easy, formalised way to set up and share costs for in-stair bike parking with neighbours I would definitely be interested.”

“It would also be great to see more safe and practical bike parking facilities in the city centre. In the Netherlands they have indoor bike parking garages. Is there a space in the city centre that can be used for something like this for people going out at night or who would like to keep their bikes dry and safe during the day? Although this is normally free in the NL, I would be willing to pay a small parking fee if I knew it would be safe.”

On landlords and practical action:

“Advice of action for tenants can take would be great. Something to pass onto my landlord with financial pros of equipping the stairwell with secure storage?”

“Not sure how much I can do as a renter - our agency tends to deny us making requests for improvements to the landlord. Could bike storage be made a condition of HMO licencing???”

“My partner keeps his bike in the stairwell and the owner (landlord) of the flat opposite asked him to move it as her fire inspection had said it was a hazard (its not preventing access in any way). ... It concerns me that landlords are getting official advice against bikes in shared tenement stairwells.”

Finally:

“I think careful consideration has to be given to the types of bikes people are storing in their homes and what purpose these bikes have, for example in the UK cycling is considered by many to be a sport/leisure activity but it isn't seen as form of transport for everyday use. As a result a lot of people have quite specialised (and expensive) bikes which they are reluctant to use for everyday use, leave in public places etc. These bikes will often spend most of the week or longer in storage, most likely in a flat or tenement! If this campaign is also about encouraging people to use their bikes more often (for utility journeys) then it's not only about providing secure storage in/near flats/tenements, it is also about providing the same level of quality/secure (and accessible) storage at the journey end point. It's important that new storage options are about making cycling more convenient/accessible and not about creating stores where people can keep their bikes for months on end (instead of their flat)!”