

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL MEETING – TUESDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2012

QUESTIONS BY GREEN COUNCILLOR IAN BAXTER [also a Spokes member] ON COUNCIL CYCLING POLICY AND ON SHERIFFHALL ROUNDABOUT

WRITTEN RESPONSES BY THE COUNCIL LEADER

Spokes note: Cllr Baxter received very comprehensive answers, so we are putting them on our website. We have added a few subheadings etc to make the answers easier to assimilate.

Question on cycling policy

To ask the Leader of the Council what progress is being made towards the target of 10% of modal share of all journeys by bicycle by 2020, a target set in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland published by the Scottish Government on 25 June 2010.

Funding

Presently, Midlothian utilises limited funds available for cycling facilities to secure match funding from other organisations including Sustrans and Cycling Scotland. In recent years Midlothian Council has been very successful in securing funding from these organisations for new cycling infrastructure and facilities in Midlothian. Although there is currently an annual Central Government “ring fenced” fund called the Cycling Walking and Safer Streets Budget (this year £94,000), funds have been provided from the Road Services Budget to establish and improve routes in conjunction with this fund. This has been highlighted in the most recent 2011/2012 Spokes Annual Cycle Funding Survey, with Midlothian being one of the top 2011/12 Councils with an above average allocation of 5.8% of the annual Roads/Transport Budget being spent on cycling infrastructure. It is accepted that this level of support from the Roads Budget may not be possible year on year due to budget constraints and other priorities but it is committed to improving facilities for cyclists when prudent to do so.

The Council have also been successful in securing cycling facilities in new developments in Midlothian that will provide the scope to expand and connect into existing cycling networks.

Constraints

It is anticipated that with the increase in cycling facilities by the Council and developers, the continued support and encouragement for cycling at all of Midlothian’s Schools and increased awareness of the cycling facilities in Midlothian there should be a continual increase in cycling trips between now and 2020. How close to the Government target of 10 % of all journeys by bicycle in Midlothian will depend on the following:-

- ◆ *The continuation of the Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Budget.*
- ◆ *The continued funding of Sustrans by Central Government for the Community Links Programme.*

- ◆ *The level of funding to Midlothian Council from the Scottish Government.*
- ◆ *The continued support from City of Edinburgh Council for cross border cycling links into Edinburgh.*
- ◆ *Increased development back to the levels prior to the recession.*
- ◆ *Increasing awareness and promotion of cycling facilities and benefits of cycling.*
- ◆ *Successful land negotiations to progress proposed cycling routes.*

Existing and new cycle facilities and projects

Some of the existing cycling facilities, initiatives and proposals in Midlothian are listed below.

New Cycleways

Roslin to Loanhead – *A 3 km off road cycleway that begins at Manse Road, Roslin and extends northwards to the City Bypass past Straiton Pond was completed last year. Recent discussions have taken place with the City of Edinburgh and Sustrans in extending the route to Burdiehouse and Gilmerton. It is understood that the extension of the route to Burdiehouse/Gilmerton is to be designed this year with a view to possibly funding the construction of the route in 2013/14. It is the aspiration to eventually extend the route to Penicuik in the south and to Shawfair and the east of Edinburgh. Initial discussions have taken place with the University of Edinburgh regarding potentially extending the route to Penicuik.*

Easthouses Road - *This year a 1.2 kilometre section of footpath was widened to make it a shared footpath/cycleway. It is proposed to discuss with landowners the connection of the cycleway to the A6016 and the Cowden Access Road off road cycling facilities, Dalkeith town centre and the National Cycle Network. At present there are no dedicated cycling facilities connecting Mayfield and Newtongrange and this is the first step in connecting these communities to the wider cycling network. It is proposed to widen existing segregated footpaths in the Mayfield area as and when the footpaths are maintained in the future.*

Other (Existing) Off Road Cycleways

Route 196 National Cycle Network - Penicuik to Sheriffhall – *A 13km off road cycleway that begins at Valleyfield in Penicuik and extends eastwards through Auchendinny, Roslin Glen, Rosewell, Bonnyrigg, Eskbank, Dalkeith and at present Sheriffhall. The route also connects to Haddington via the Pencaitland cycleway.*

As part of the route from Hardengreen to Sheriffhall will be severed by the Waverley railway an alternative route has been mostly constructed and will be ready for use once the railway is operational.

Dalkeith Campus to East Lothian Boundary – *A 1.5 km section of cycleway in Midlothian, that extends into East Lothian and terminates in Whitecraig. This forms part of National Cycle Route 1 (Coast to Castles Route).*

Shared Use Footpaths

A772 Gilmerton Road – 0.5km section of footpath from A7 past Dobbies Garden World to the City of Edinburgh boundary (northern footpath). Edinburgh Council has also established shared use on the footpath extending from their boundary to the mini roundabout at Gilmerton Station Road.

B6392 Bonnyrigg Distributer Road – From Cockpen Road, Bonnyrigg south westwards to beyond the second roundabout.

A701 – From the northern footpath at the traffic signals at New Milton dual carriageway northwards to Gowkley Moss Roundabout

Bush Farm Loan – 2 sections from A703 Seafield Moor Road to Bush Loan Road.

A6106 -From Sheriffhall Roundabout to Bridge End.

Cowden Access Road – Segregated shared footpath/cycleway from A6106 to Musselburgh Road and Dalkeith School Campus

Hopefield – Shared footpath cycleway network to connect into the existing cycle network

Rural Footpaths in Midlothian – It is hoped to investigate the possibility of cyclists using remote footpaths where there is limited pedestrian use. This could potentially provide greater safety for less experienced cyclists along semi rural and rural roads where there are speed limits between 40 and 60 mph).

On Road Cycle Lanes

A701 (Northbound and Southbound) - From Mauricewood Road, Penicuik to Straiton Road, excluding section through Milton Bridge (5km each direction)

A7 (Northbound and Southbound) - From Sheriffhall Roundabout to traffic signals at the Wisp (2km each direction).

B6392 (Northbound and Southbound) - From Eskbank Road to Melville Gate roundabout (1km each direction)

A7(Gorebridge to Sheriffhall) – In 2012 or 2013 it is hoped to provide some cycle lanes along the A7 from Newtonloan Toll to Sheriffhall Roundabout (where road width permits).

Cycling at Midlothian's Schools

Nearly all schools in Midlothian have cycle parking facilities, with facilities continually being added to depending on demand.

Of the 30 Primary Schools in Midlothian 9 have achieved Cycle Friendly School Status from Cycling Scotland and 3 are currently being assessed.

Saltergate ASN (Additional Support Needs) School has also achieved its Cycle Friendly School Award. Saltergate was the first ASN school to receive an award in Scotland.

Recently Cycling Scotland rolled out Cycling Friendly School Status for High Schools and it is the intention for all of Midlothian's High Schools to try and achieve their awards in the coming months.

Earlier this year Beeslack High School in Penicuik was awarded funding from Cycling Scotland to establish a Bike Club at the School. The training, facilities and bikes are now in place and a programme of events with the staff and pupils are being progressed.

Funding for a Bike Club in Lasswade High School has also been recently awarded by Cycling Scotland, with matched funding from the Cycling and Walking and Safer Streets Budget. It is hoped to establish the Bike Club at the School over the coming months.

There has been interest from the other High Schools in Midlothian and it is hoped to progress bids in the future, depending on funding being available from Cycling Scotland.

Improved Cycleway Signage

In recent years the signage for Midlothian's cycleways has greatly improved with the assistance and support from Sustrans.

"MEGACYCLE"

Megacycle is an annual cycling event arranged by Sustran (and supported by Midlothian and East Lothian Councils) that starts at Penicuik, passing through Auchendinny, Roslin Glen, Rosewell, Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith and then continuing into East Lothian. This year there were over 600 participants taking part in the event. This type of event helps to promote the cycling facilities in Midlothian.

Questions re Sheriffhall roundabout

Sheriffhall roundabout : current and future position

Question: Has any progress been made towards providing safe cycle routes across Sheriffhall roundabout? Are there any plans for providing safe cycle routes across Sheriffhall roundabout?

Situation currently for cyclists at Sheriffhall Roundabout

Currently there are continuous cycle lanes on the A7 from Danderhall to Sheriffhall Roundabout and a shared widened footpath on the A6106 from Sheriffhall Roundabout to Bridge end. Also the speed limits on the A7 and A6106

are restricted at 50 mph and 40 mph to assist cyclists to cycle into Edinburgh and vice versa. Once cyclists reach Sheriffhall Roundabout there are no dedicated cycling facilities on the approaches or on circulatory carriageway. As there are 6 entries onto the roundabout and there are “spiral” road markings there is very little capacity/space to provide dedicated cycling lanes/advanced stop lines. It is acknowledged that Sheriffhall Roundabout is not ideal for cyclists to navigate through, although the introduction of traffic signals has helped by “platooning” traffic flows at the roundabout. Transport Scotland has not indicated that there are any plans to review the current layout at the roundabout with respect to cyclist facilities. Ideally grade separation would be the best solution for cyclists at Sheriffhall roundabout.

Current Cycling Alternatives to Sheriffhall Roundabout Route

On the B6392 from Eskbank Roundabout to Melville Gate Roundabout, cycle lanes have been painted in both directions with the speed limit reduced to 40 mph to assist cyclists. From Melville Gate Roundabout, past Dobbies Garden World the footpath has been widened for shared use up to the City of Edinburgh boundary.

Following discussions with Sustrans and the City of Edinburgh Council the “shared use” footpath has been extended along Gilmerton Road to the junction with Gilmerton Station Road. From there, most of the route along Gilmerton Road has bus lanes (cyclists are permitted to use bus lanes) and cycle lanes.

The National Cycle Network Route 1 currently passes through Eskbank Road, Dalkeith, with the on- road route carrying on eastwards through Dalkeith High Street towards Dalkeith Campus (some off road). From the Campus the route continues off road towards Whitecraig in East Lothian and continues onto Edinburgh. In terms of the Borders Rail Link Project, the off road section of cycleway between Hardengreen and Sheriffhall will be lost. However an alternative east/west route has been mostly completed via the new Jewel and Esk College, Ancrum Road, the new St David’s housing development, Newbattle Golf Course, Waterfall Park and through Woodburn to tie in with the National Cycle Network.

The other potential alternative cycle route avoiding Sheriffhall Roundabout is from Dalkeith Park to the “cow tunnel” under the City Bypass into Millerhill. Discussions have taken place with the representatives from Dalkeith Park but there are security and resource issues that require to be resolved. It is the intention to re-visit this potential route as and when Shawfair is established.

Sheriffhall roundabout : History

Spokes note: This question relates to what is now ancient history, dating back around 10 years. Although the information is very disappointing if you don't already know it, it is not new information, and it is not the responsibility of the present council. There is no point raking this over further as the money has long since been lost to cycling investment and cannot be recovered. However we include the information here for completeness.

Question: On 28 October 1999, the Scottish Government announced that Midlothian Council had been awarded £802,000 “for a bridge for cyclists and pedestrians at Sheriffhall”. To ask the Leader of the Council, did Midlothian Council take receipt of the award in part or in whole? And if so, how was the money spent?

Midlothian Council were awarded £802,000 in October 1999 from the Public Transport Fund (PTF) to provide a north/south pedestrian and cycle bridge cross the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass at Sheriffhall Roundabout. This was promoted as an interim measure whilst full grade separation of the junction was the Council's long term preference – there were however no plans by the Executive then or now to do so. The award was given in the form of borrowing consent for use in financial year 2000-01. The implementation of the scheme was however significantly delayed by necessary land acquisition, which was resolved in 2003.

The tenders which subsequently came in for the design and construction of the bridge exceeded the budget available by £40-70k, and the Council asked The Scottish Executive to meet the shortfall. By that time, the prudential regime had been introduced for local authority capital borrowing and consents issued in financial years 2003-04 and thereafter had been turned into capital grant under section 70 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001. The Scottish Executive approach in dealing with such requests for extra funding has been that Councils are expected to manage any cost increases in Public Transport Fund projects themselves. There is also no facility for the Executive to transfer consents awarded in prior years into capital grant, nor to reclaim any unused consent.

The Council thereafter confirmed that at that time they were not now proceeding with the cycle bridge, partly in anticipation that grade separation at some time in the future would make it redundant.

Agreement was reached with the Scottish Executive that monies could be allocated to another project providing that alternate cycle facilities were provided in due course. In the event the money was re-allocated to complete the Todhills Park and ride site.