

Development of Cycling Infrastructure in Scotland towards 2020

With new Scottish Government cycling investment apparently on the horizon¹ this discussion paper suggests how cycling infrastructure policy should develop over the next few years and how new funding can be used. It does not go into 'soft' measures, except where section 4 refers to the growing issue of casualty reduction. Where conditions are safe and perceived to be so, appropriate soft measures can be included in budgets.

1. The objective post 2020

- (a) The top aim is for cycling and walking to be the primary transport modes for everyday local journeys in communities of all sizes throughout Scotland - to work, to the shops, the cinema, schools, friends, etc.
- (b) A subsidiary aim is for cycling to have a major leisure role right across Scotland, whether short weekend rides or cycling holidays 'at home.' Such cycling should be considered as leisure travel, not sport – i.e. as an alternative to using a car, not as a destination to which to drive with a bike on top.

2. Raising cycle use – infrastructure delivery

- (a) By 2020 **every local authority and other relevant delivery body** (including RTPs, ScotRail, Scottish Canals, business organisations) to have the staffing, expertise, plans and funding arrangements enabling them to provide widespread local cycling infrastructure which is safe and is perceived to be safe – including physically segregated provision where appropriate.
- (b) To ensure (a), expertise, experimentation and implementation must be ramped up rapidly every year from 2013 on to 2020, this to be achieved with a strong political, technical and financial lead from government. **Government has set the objective of greatly increased cycle use, so government must make it happen.**
- (c) This ramping-up would be achieved in part using expertise and experience built up through **early large-scale cycling infrastructure projects implemented by those local authorities which already possess, or can rapidly develop, the necessary skills and political commitment.**
- (d) This could also tie in with the Spokes NPF3 proposal² for a national initiative comprising **one pilot cycle-friendly town or city in each local authority**, these to be linked by an improved national network.
- (e) Measures solely to promote cycle use are insufficient. They must be accompanied³ by **measures to reduce the desirability of short car trips**. This should include levies on retail and leisure complexes, workplaces and other destinations, based on the number of car spaces over a certain minimum; urban parking charges, and innovative infrastructural solutions such as the sector-based approach of Houten⁴ in the Netherlands.

3. Funding these measures – the what and the how

- (a) Scottish Government annual cycling investment is some £20m, representing 1%, and often less, of the total transport budget - though it may approach £30m in 2014/15.⁵ This has to rise if the above is to be achieved. We suggest £40m in the 14/15 budget with continuing increases in the next Spending Review, to 5% by 2020, representing £10 per head of population (or 10% for active travel as a whole). Together with elements of match-funding from local authority and other partners this could mean some £15-£20 per head for cycling investment [much of which also benefits walkers]. A levy on car-spaces [2e above] could provide a useful new funding source, although that is not its primary purpose.

1 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2013/09/budget-bewilderment/>

2 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00431846.pdf>

3 <http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/Irresistible.pdf>

4 <https://www.houten.nl/burgers/verkeer-en-vervoer/fietsen1/cycling1/>

5 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2013/09/budget-bewilderment/>

- (b) In the period up to 2020, funding should be directed to...
- * **achieving a basic level of implementation and experience in every local authority**, and
 - * **enabling advanced local authorities to implement large scale cycling projects** [2c below].
- (c) As proposed in our 12/13 budget submission⁶, in order to achieve the two above aims, the increasing government cycling investment proposed above should be used to build on successful existing funding methods, organised through Transport Scotland's Sustainable and Active Travel team, particularly...
- * **continuing rises in CWSS**
 - * **continuing rises in Sustrans funding** for widespread work with local authority and other partners
 - * **a new bidding fund for large-scale cycling infrastructure projects** open to any relevant body, including local authorities, RTPs, Scottish Canals, ScotRail, etc. The fund should particularly seek a range of types of area – city segments, large towns, smaller towns with surrounding villages, etc, so as to build experience, evidence and expertise. In particular, this fund should enable **truly large-scale demonstration projects** on the lines of those recently funded in England by the UK government⁷ - which have generated great local political enthusiasm and commitment. The fund should also recognise that such projects need **consistent, assured funding over a significant period of years** - initially certainly continuing up to 2020.
- (d) For the last 15+ years, Spokes has conducted an annual survey of cycling investment in Scotland from all main sources – including seeking feedback from local authority officers responsible for cycling policy. Two messages come through loud and clear every year⁸...
- * **Dedicated national infrastructure funding [CWSS and Sustrans] is essential** – without it some councils will invest zero in cycling, whereas with it many councils will put in match-funding.
 - * **Basic funding must be consistent and announced on a multi-year basis** - to allow planning, land purchase, consultations, etc. Money which becomes suddenly available (e.g. Consequentials) is welcome but is a bonus enabling simple off-the-shelf projects, and often unsuitable for major programmed schemes.

4. Casualty reduction – the why and the how

- (a) Recent years have seen an end to the long-term trend of falling cycling casualties, with increases in KSI, whereas the improving trend has, in general, continued for other road user categories. This change of trend for cycling casualties is not explained by cycle usage, which is relatively static. Quite apart from the tragedy of KSIs, if the trend continues it poses serious political problems to any program to raise cycle use.
- (b) The Scottish Government needs to accept that this is happening and that current traditional approaches to casualty reduction have not dealt with it. We propose in (c) and (d) below two new approaches.
- (c) **Research should be instituted as to why the long-term improving trend in cycling casualties has reversed. It is vital to understand what has caused this change, and thus to inform cycling and road safety policy development.** Ideally the research should be conducted independently, and it should consider all theories, including that of changes in the composition of the cycling population⁹.
- (d) Data¹⁰ shows clearly that certain types of road are significantly more dangerous, per cycled km, than others; with 'A' roads much more dangerous than lesser roads, and rural roads generally more dangerous (particularly in terms of deaths) than urban roads of the equivalent category. **A degree of priority should therefore be given to tackling the more dangerous road types.** We suggest the following approach...
- * **Urban A roads.** These are relatively short distances, often being direct routes into a town or city centre, so infrastructure solutions providing greater cyclist/motor separation and/or direct and convenient alternatives should be implemented. Speed limit reductions to 30mph should be considered, even down to 20mph for main roads with significant pedestrian and/or cyclist use, as recently agreed by Edinburgh City.
 - * **Rural roads (particularly but not exclusively 'A' roads).** These pose a particular problem due to long distances and lower cycle density per km, meaning that widespread infrastructural solutions are likely to be a long time coming, although heavily cycled sections and particular blackspots should be tackled as soon as possible. Therefore, non-infrastructural measures, which can be introduced comparatively quickly, are particularly important. These include **Strict Liability, lower speed limits, and average speed cameras.**

6 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/1208-Finance-Cttee-Spokes-submission-final.pdf>

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-shifts-cycling-up-a-gear>

8 For example, pages 6-7 of Spokes Bulletin 111 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/bulletin/>

9 See page 7 of Spokes Bulletin 115 <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/bulletin/>

10 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/10163/ras30018.xls