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Members of the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Cycling, Walking and Buses...

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24 February 2017

Dear Sir

CONSULTATION ON RAISING PLANNING FEES' ... response from Spokes

Whilst this consultation is primarily about fees for large developments, the consultation paper also states, "We will be considering wider changes to the fee structure ... taking account of changes to the planning system flowing from the (Independent Planning) review."

Our concern relates to certain exceptionally small developments, namely planning application fees for bike sheds or containers in gardens, an issue referred to in the report of the Independent Review.

For many householders - for example those in terraces or tenements without a back garden or with no entry to the garden other than through the dwelling - the only realistic place to store bikes which are in everyday use is front garden storage. In using bikes for everyday trips householders are contributing to the government's unbelievably ambitious yet "unshakable" aimⁱⁱ for 10% of all trips to be by bike in 2020 (which the First Minister has said the government is "determined" to meet), to public health and climate objectives, and to local authority LTS objectives.

Despite this, a householder has to pay a £202 planning application fee merely to discover whether or not permission will be granted even for the smallest shed or container, costing perhaps under £100. It is no surprise that many people already evade the law, install a shed or container without seeking permission, and hope they will not be reported.

Due to the above, combined with the unpleasant and months-long stress which enforcement methods have caused to householders in several cases of which we are aware, Spokes made a submissionⁱⁱⁱ about this to the 2015 Independent Review of Planning, proposing that sheds or containers meeting specified criteria should be deemed to be permitted development. [A separate document^{iv} prepared by Spokes in consultation with Edinburgh City Council includes the types of criteria that might be appropriate].

We were gratified that this matter was positively mentioned in the report^v of the Independent Review and, further, that the Government, in its July 2016 response^{vi} to the Review, identified “significantly extending permitted development” as one of ten "priority key actions" on which it would work with the Heads of Planning, Scotland.

We very much hope that work on the “priority key actions” will be expedited and that permitted development status will be granted before long for sheds/containers meeting specified criteria.

However, whether or not permitted development status is granted for small sheds/containers, there may remain a question around larger sheds, for which permission might still be required.

We urge that the fee for any applications still required for sheds/containers should be reduced to a more realistic level, say £50 – given, firstly, that they enable important contributions to government and local authority objectives on health, climate, congestion and cycle use (and indeed are contributing to public finances through reduced NHS and traffic infrastructure and road maintenance costs) and, secondly, that the sheds themselves are likely to cost significantly less than the current fee.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu
for Spokes

i <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510960.pdf>

ii <http://www.transport.gov.scot/report/cycling-action-plan-scotland-2017-2020-9743>

iii <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Planning-Review-Spokes-sheds-response.pdf>

iv <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Cycle-sheds-factsheet-Word97-v12-FINAL.pdf>

v <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00500946.pdf>

vi <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Review-of-Planning/documents>