

Subject:Cycling policy

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Thank you for contacting me about cycling policy. I strongly believe that cycling must be fully integrated into transport policy as a whole and that we must make absolutely sure that government – and here in Scotland it is the Scottish Government that is responsible for cycling policy - provides sustained investment but the reality is that we have a long way to go here as elsewhere in the UK to reach the levels of funding for cycling that we ought and need to have.

I am a cyclist myself and a member of Spokes, the Lothian cycle campaign, and I strongly believe that for a range of reasons support for active travel should be a priority for both the UK and Scottish Governments: it's vital if we are to improve air quality and cut congestion but it also has important health benefits too.

I was one of the MPs behind a report produced by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling last year which called for a revolution in Government support for cycling: in the Netherlands 27% of journeys are made by cycling and 19% in Denmark, whereas in the UK the figure is 2%.

In a speech on the report in Parliament I highlighted the work being done here in Edinburgh to change that. You can my speech at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141016/debtext/141016-0003.htm#14101661001093>

In 2012 Edinburgh City Council made a commitment to increase cycling's share of the council transport budget by 1% each year and it has stuck to it: from 5% two years ago it now stands at 7%. The City Council Transport department headed by my Labour colleague, Lesley Hinds, is also extending 20mph zones in Edinburgh – a policy that I began when I was the City Councillor responsible for transport policy.

I was pleased to see in addition the City Council is working with Cycling Scotland to provide pioneering awareness training for Council van and lorry drivers of the needs of cyclists. It's an important initiative because HGVs are 3 times as likely to be involved in fatal accidents as other vehicles.

That is why I challenged UK Ministers as well when this Government introduced new rules to licence longer HGVs – you can find more on this at <http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/mp-warns-over-bigger-lorry-plans-1-1877260>

Despite the City Council's cycling-friendly initiatives, even here in Edinburgh there are issues that need to be addressed as for instance access for cyclists to Waverley Station is currently only possibly via the pedestrian footway from Waverley Bridge. That's undesirable for both cyclists and pedestrians and an illustration of the need to better integrate cycling with other forms of transport.

The Labour Party is committed to making cycling safer across the UK and has set out a number of measures which will achieve this such as introducing tougher new rules for HGVs in order to reduce collisions with cyclists, a Cycle Safety Assessment of all new road schemes, restoring national targets to cut deaths and serious injuries and implementing a new national target to increase levels of cycling.

Although cycling policy in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Government, I was one of the MPs who recently signed a New Clause to the Infrastructure Bill at Westminster to require the UK Secretary of State for Transport to set out a 5 year cycling and walking investment strategy for England.

I am glad to say that after sustained pressure the Government was forced to accept that as part of the Bill. I also signed another Amendment to make regard for air quality a statutory duty of the Strategic Highways Authority but unfortunately that was resisted by the Government.

The Scottish Government did publish an active travel plan in February 2013 which envisioned 10% of all journeys being by bike in Scotland by 2020. However, organisations working in the field like Spokes have expressed concern that the funding that has been allocated is nothing like enough to make that possible - Scottish Government spending on active travel is set to fall by 8% next year.

We need a clear strategy of how to increase the number of people cycling and the number of journeys made by bike but the funding has to be there to make that a reality – I want to see the Scottish Government set aside proper funding as the City Council here in Edinburgh has. Cycling must be fully integrated with transport generally so that it is a key priority in transport policy not just an afterthought.

You can find more details of my policies, my biography, and what I've said and done in Parliament on my website.

If you would like to help my campaign for reelection, please email me and we will keep you informed!

Best wishes

Mark Lazarowicz

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