

# SPOKES KES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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To: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Attention: Derek Mackay, Minister for Transport and Islands  
cc: Cross-Party Cycling Group and others

7 December 2015

Dear Minister

## **Closure of Forth Road Bridge – Cycling as a traffic management opportunity**

Spokes appreciates the seriousness of the Bridge closure and the great amount of effort involved in setting up and refining major rail and traffic management alternatives.

Nonetheless we are disappointed that there has, at least in public, been no attempt to include in the planning the cycling opportunities and problems resulting from the bridge closure. Merely a brief sentence that cycling (and walking) is banned, with no further comment.

This is really disappointing given the government's oft-repeated commitment to taking cycling seriously as a transport mode, let alone its wish drastically to increase levels of cycle use.

Spokes has received many contacts from people concerned about this apparent lack of consideration, particularly of the opportunities. Our initial tweet on the subject...

<https://twitter.com/SpokesLothian/status/672776757498482689>

... has already received over 50 retweets.

## **Problems**

The Sustran Cross-Boundary Cycling Report<sup>1</sup> shows that in 2011 there were some 100 regular bike commuters across the Bridge, 85 or so of them southbound. This figure is likely to have been at least doubled by your government's very significant expenditure on the A90 cyclepath<sup>2</sup> from the Bridge to the city, a formerly very poor route which now receives high praise for its standard most of the way. A daily Edinburgh-bound commuter tells us “*I regularly pass up to 5 people Fife-bound whilst on the bridge.*”

These perhaps 200 people, now banned from the bridge, will be adding to the car and public transport congestion. For example, this email...

*“I work in Livingston and regularly cycle from Ferrytoll to work, even in the winter. Now suddenly I am forced to travel by car. I know lots of people who cycle commute over the bridge. In addition there are many people who have relatively short journeys to or from across the bridge who would consider this an option rather than taking a massively extended detour. The current travel plan takes absolutely no notice of cycling. I can not believe for a moment that 'if the will was present' that access could not be facilitated - a blanket ban on cyclists without a rationale is an opportunity missed.”*

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1 [http://www.sestran.gov.uk/uploads/10.1.1\\_Strategic\\_Cross\\_Boundary\\_Cycle\\_Development.pdf](http://www.sestran.gov.uk/uploads/10.1.1_Strategic_Cross_Boundary_Cycle_Development.pdf)

2 <https://twitter.com/SpokesLothian/status/593089940554121217>

## Opportunities

We fully appreciate that enabling cycling may involve difficulties of which we are not aware, but given the two roadways and the two separate cyclist routes, we find it hard to believe that some solution is not possible, and we make some suggestions below.

Since prior to the closure there were perhaps 200 regular bike commuters (see above) and given the big time delays for car and bus users resulting from the closure, allowing cycling could well increase that figure substantially.

Furthermore an arrangement such as temporary bike storage at the south end of the bridge, and a bus link to Edinburgh, would enable much larger numbers of people to cycle from Fife, without being put off by the thought of the further long cycle into the city. If successful, this could even be maintained after bridge reopening.

Finally, the above could be combined with bike hire across the bridge, using existing bike fleets which are underused in the winter. Already one of our members, who runs a bike business, has spontaneously contacted us to offer a hire fleet.

Combining all the above could easily raise bike commuters very substantially indeed, thus making a worthwhile contribution to reduced congestion, lost business time and personal frustration. Furthermore, it would be a marvellous demonstration of cycling as a serious form of everyday transport – something which you have frequently said you wish to show and promote.

## Options

As stated, Spokes as a voluntary organisation is not fully au fait with the constraints resulting from the repair work. However, among suggestions we have received are, in decreasing order of convenience...

- Allowing relatively unrestricted cycling, with appropriate signage/warnings as necessary, on one route across the bridge – though we appreciate this maybe problematic as we understand the existing cyclist routes are being used for access vehicles
- Allowing cyclists to cross in escorted convoys – for example setting a timetable of every 15 or 20 minutes, or every time numbers reach a certain level. The escort would ensure that any working areas/ obstructions were negotiated safely.
- Allowing escorted convoys during peak periods only initially, but expanding to all-day if experience is satisfactory.
- A final suggestion we received, and not our preference from the cycling perspective, is to have a 6-carriage shuttle train running solely between North QF and Dalmeny, slotting into the gaps between other trains, waiting at either end in the sidings at Dalmeny and Inverkeithing whilst other trains pass – primarily to allow coach-ticket holders to cross the bridge without a detour, but also enabling pedestrians and cyclists to do so. [Further details were also supplied, re handling passenger numbers at the relevant stations].

In conclusion we are very disappointed that cycling has apparently not been considered as a relevant and useful form of transport which can contribute to easing the problems. Given that rail and road systems to help the situation have already been set up, we urge that cycling should now also receive full and prompt consideration. We look forward to hearing from you on this.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu  
for Spokes