

Spokes 40th Anniversary Reception by City of Edinburgh Council, 14 Nov 2017

Transcript of speech by Council Leader Cllr Adam McVey

This followed a speech by Dave du Feu for Spokes, to which Adam McVey refers. A video of both speeches, including Dave's slides, is available [here](#), together with many other anniversary materials [spokes.org.uk : documents : odds : history].

"Thanks very much Dave, I was trying to remember where I was in 1977, I'm struggling...

I should say I enjoyed David's slide show and I've got a slide show that will take us through the next three and a half hours, articulating exactly – no I'm joking. It's just going to be me chatting briefly.

I did notice in one of your slides though Dave that you had on the bottom please feel free to share this representation as a local Councillor or MSP with the Transport Convener and I am reliably informed that Lesley MacInnes the Transport Convener is more than happy for you to write to her directly and cut out the middle man of your MSPs and Councillors through that.

Dave also said in his speech that he wants cycling to be a legitimate option for people to choose and I think that is right. For us as a city it is not an option, it's a necessity. We are growing at an exponential rate and for us to manage that kind of demand, that kind of pressure on our transport system, it's not - although we're investing in things like or looking to invest in things like high capacity public transport, and further support of Lothian buses who do such a fantastic job, in order to get people out of private car and create the kind of capacity we need in the city to cater for that growth, cycling and walking have to be a major part of that solution and that is something we are absolutely committed to.

Some of the stats Dave's went through already but just to put some of them in a bit more context in 1980 only 25 kilometres of road in the city had some sort of protected provision including bus lane provision and that has now virtually ten times that amount even including bus lanes, when you strip out bus lanes it's almost ten times that number, so it's been - I mean we can stand here and talk about the last forty years as if it was a flash in the pan and it happened overnight. It was a long long slog to get to that point where we have a spine of infrastructure in the city and we are now looking to build on that going forward. The last ten years has seen a bit of a change in methodology and there's always transport methodology that changes and people's attitudes change.

In the last 10 years the focus has been – I mean when you look at the infrastructure that has been built I think this reading is true direct on-road segregated route because these are the routes that people experience when they're on the bus, in the car, or walking to work, and it's those routes that are very visible to people. I mean you invest in them like we are doing in Leith Walk, like we're doing in Roseburn, difficult decisions, difficult to manage all those different demands in that space but when you progress those sorts of investments that are in key commuter corridors that's when you get the modal shift that we need as a city. When you send cyclists around the houses, people are far less likely to know that it is there, so you spend money and end up not getting so good a bang for your buck. But it is not getting that modal change we need and this is not just a transport issue. It's a health and social care issue. This is an issue about health and making our population healthier not just in their day to day lives but healthier longer in life.

You can look at the stats in terms of the number of people that are cycling and track it from the investment that's been made and it very much tells a story about build it and they will come. It also tells a bit of a story about when people apply pressure for specific investments in specific areas they are usually right and it is something that politicians should absolutely listen to. But we shouldn't forget about the other measures we are trying to take, the measures the Scottish government I think are looking at just now in terms of liability, the measures that the Council took in terms of 20 mph and rolling that out and making it the default speed limit across the city.

That makes it safer not only in the places we have managed to get to to invest but makes it safer absolutely everywhere and far more likely people will take up cycling as an option not just on segregated cycleways but on those key commuter corridors that are in their communities where they see every day to get to work.

The Big Bike launch was today and there was some fantastic stats that came out of it. 75% of the people in the city want even more cycling investment so at 10% of our transport budget go on cycling and people want even more. I think that's absolutely fantastic. And 80% of people want to see cycling investment prioritised even if that means a reduction in space for car.

And I think we have to be honest and have an honest conversation with the people of Edinburgh. It's a lie frankly, there's no other word to describe it, to tell people that they can have all the parking they want in the city centre, that they can have as many lanes of traffic and the congestion will somehow magically go away if only we build more motorways in certain key places or build that capacity. It's a lie, and we should call it out as a lie when we've been told it. And people deserve to know what the situation is, what the fact is. And that fact is you have to take away parking sometimes, you have to take away road space sometimes, to make that kind of transformative infrastructure, but ultimately if you do it in the right way it's not just good for people who are already cycling, it's good for everyone, because more people will be cycling. It improves the pedestrian environment because you don't have cars whizzing past you at 30 mph, you'll have cyclists if it's me panting alongside you when I ride my bike. It's good for everyone. And it's good for the motorist as well and we should make that argument. We shouldn't be afraid to make that relatively sophisticated seemingly conflicting argument that actually to take cars off, to create that modal shift is not only good for those engaging in that modal shift, it is good for literally every road user.

I'm seeing Andrew Burns in the audience. On the 15th of June when Spokes had its bike breakfast outside I spoke at that and pledged that this would be the most bike friendly administration that this Council has ever had. So I am absolutely trying to steal your thunder Andrew. I've got you in my sights and I think that myself and Lesley MacInnes will hopefully build on the success achieved by Andrew Burns and Lesley Hinds in the previous administration as well.

The last real thing I want to say is this. Although again it is easy for me to say, to stand here and talk about what we are trying to do, the budgets that we are putting in, the bold decisions that we are making, on Leith Walk and Roseburn and other key infrastructure projects, despite everyone's good will in this room and despite that 80% of people who are saying in surveys that they want to see more investment even if that means a reduction in car space, this is still hard. The measures that we need to develop, the kind of infrastructure that we need, are still hard. They are hard for politicians to come up with the budget and come up with the scheme and it's hard to face the political reality sometimes of a business shouting in your face saying they are going to go bust because you are building a bike lane past their shop and you're taking away their parking. We are up for the hard work this is going to take but we shouldn't pretend it's going to be easy and we are under no illusions that from the slog that there has been for the last forty years that somehow in the next five years we will transform the city to be the kind of bike paradise that we all think the city deserves to be. We know it's going to be hard, we know it's going to be even more of a slog but we know that the trajectories are in our favour and we know that once you build on success and keep on building on it the returns improve each time you do it. So, I suppose just to finish, we are up for the slog and I hope you are still with us when we're slogging away in five years time.

Thank you very much."