

SPOKES MAPS OF THE LOTHIAN

notes on maps history

In addition to our hugely popular Edinburgh map, Spokes has published a series of cycling/ walking maps for the Lothians. Editions so far, with publication dates, are...

East Lothian	2003, 2008, 2014, 2017
Midlothian	1998, 2002, 2009, 2015
West Lothian	2000, 2005, West Lothian & Livingston 2012, 2018

This document gives some highlights from the history of these maps.

Up to 2017 inclusive, cartography was by Tim Smith (TS) and concepts and data collection jointly by TS and Peter Hawkins (PH). In 2018 a new approach to data collection was successfully used for the new West Lothian edition.

Method of production

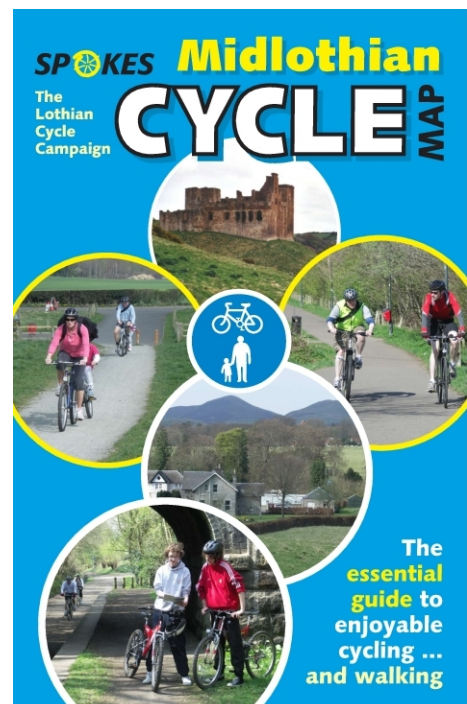
The Lothians maps up to 2018 inclusive were all created on computer (Macromedia Freehand). Part of the process also required paper proofs to be printed out. For the first editions these were in small sections for PH to mark on the gradients and mileages. Subsequently also used for on-the-ground checks.

The files that now go to the printers are high resolution PDFs. Printing was done for many years by Scotprint at Haddington. They closed down a few years ago and we now use Victoria Litho in London – there are very few specialist printers with a large enough press. Most of the time in printing is taken up with preparing the four colour plates plates and getting the image correct. Running off a few thousand copies is then done very quickly. Then there's the trimming, folding and insertion of membership forms to do, before final packing. We try to get the maps supplied in boxes of 100 for convenience of stocktaking.

All the mapping is OS based, which means copyright fees have to be paid on each new printing.

The first Lothians maps

The very first was our **Midlothian map** (1998) which was inspired by the *Cycle Challenge Fund* created by the Scottish Office (i.e. pre-Scottish Parliament), to which any organisation could bid for cash for projects to encourage cycle use. Our successful bid (which covered several initiatives in addition to the map) was supplemented with funding from City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council, Midlothian Council and ourselves. We were required to carry out before-and-after user surveys as part of the project and also to set up as a separate sub-division within Spokes with its own funding.



Technically, TS was starting from scratch as regards large maps, having only done geography book illustration previously, but nevertheless this map won an award.

PH and TS between them innovated several new features that did not appear on the Spokes Edinburgh map because the latter was largely a street map whereas the Lothians maps were largely countryside (and bigger scale)...

- ◆ **Gradient system** Instead of contour lines covering the whole map area we feel it's more useful for the cycling user to have the gradient information shown on the *roads only*. This we do by means of simple V-shaped arrow symbols, which always point downhill. The user can see at a glance where the steep gradients are because the arrows are closer together. This also unclutters the rest of the map, leaving room for other information.
- ◆ **Distance system** Distances are shown in miles (as decimals, not fractions) between all road junctions (including minor roads) and on main cyclepaths. This makes it easier for the user to work out the total length of a bike ride than by using the scale bar. Although this involves some rounding of numbers, the totalled distance should be close enough for most purposes.
- ◆ **Busy Road system** We use road colouring to give an indication of the traffic levels likely to be met by cyclists: **pink** for usually busier roads where some may find cycling uncomfortable, and **yellow** for quieter roads. The judgement on this is necessarily a subjective one because traffic conditions vary due to time of day, season, weather, etc. but our colouring is a *general* guide intended to help cyclists who don't know an area to choose a route that we hope will normally best suit their personal preferences.
- ◆ **Street maps** We also included street maps (as many as would fit in the space on the back) but without the gradient and mileage systems, although the road colouring was retained. These street maps include playgrounds, for families making bike outings with kids.
- ◆ **Full colour** The Lothians maps were in full colour throughout from the very first edition, unlike early editions of our Edinburgh map.
- ◆ **Places of Interest** (called *Sites Worth Seeing* in later editions) Short descriptive notes with opening times, contact details, etc. and attractive photos of some. Shown in two colour-coded categories: *Historic/architectural* (brown) and *Nature Reserves/Woodland* (green).

There was a lot of work to create the first edition of each of the Lothians maps. PH marked up proofs with the gradient symbols and distances, which TS then transferred on to the artwork. Subsequent editions obviously did not need to have this process done again.

Subsequent editions

For all editions there was a considerable amount of on-the-ground checking of cycling facilities by both PH and TS. Latterly this consisted mainly of checking planning drawings, in some cases ahead of building starting, plus checking new build on-the-ground for cut-throughs, path categories, etc.

West Lothian maps, extra points

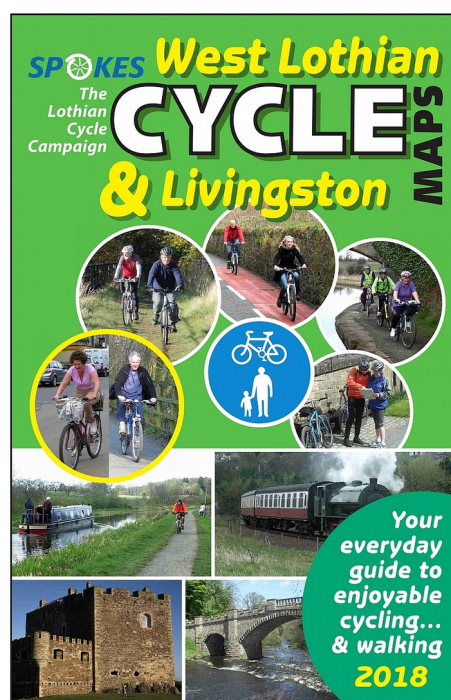
The first two West Lothian editions had a similar format to the other Lothians maps, with street mapping on the reverse. However, because the first edition of WL was funded by the Winchburgh-based Auldcathie Trust the street mapping was centred around that area and was not entirely logical in terms of covering the whole of West Lothian.

When it came to the third (2012) edition it was decided (between TS, PH and DdF) that it would be far more useful to have a large map of **Livingston** on the reverse instead of the smaller towns printed on the previous editions. This turned out to be a very good decision, but also quite a job to originate the mapping and then add what is a very complex cyclepath network.

2018 West Lothian: new surveying approach

For this edition we decided to see if local members from the area would be willing to do surveying. This proved highly successful, with some 10 members volunteering, including two who became coordinators. The coordinators checked that the material from surveyors was in the required format, then fed it to TS so that he would not have to deal with all the potential inconsistencies of individual surveyors. By this means every square of the map was fully checked – something we had not been able to achieve completely with any previous map. TS has written a detailed description of the process, *How the West was Done*, and this is linked from our website story about the 2018 West Lothian map ...

www.spokes.org.uk/2018/08/west-lothian-2018-spokesmap.



Funding

To cover the high initial costs of the first editions of all three Lothians maps we raised outside sponsorship, which in turn imposed some conditions on the map content and coverage. Subsequent editions were cheaper to produce and became largely self-funding until sales fell due to competition from on-line and interactive mapping alternatives such as Sustrans and Open Street Map.

For future editions we will again need to seek sponsorship for part of the costs, as we have done for the latest (2016) Edinburgh edition, with no constraints on the map content other than including brief information from the sponsors.

Different sponsors vary drastically in the amount of bureaucracy they impose to obtain grant support. Generally Councils require the least paperwork, whereas some national agencies are so bureaucratic as to deter future applications.

In some cases we have negotiated with Councils to purchase a large supply of the maps for their own internal use, and at relevant Council bike-promotion and other events, and these purchases have been a useful source of early funding for the edition.

Print runs

Recent print runs have been reduced, due to declining sales as a result of online competition, but a clear demand for paper maps remains, as exemplified by running out of East Lothian and Edinburgh maps much sooner than anticipated and having to reprint (taking the opportunity to update). Our move to water-resistant and tear-resistant paper in 2016 has also proved a valuable selling point.

East Lothian	5000 (Edition 1); 5000 (2); 2200* (3); 3000 (4)
Midlothian	5000 (Edition 1); 5000 (2); 5000 (3); 2100* (4)
West Lothian	5000 (Edition 1); 5000 (2); 5000 (3); 3000 (4)

*The odd numbers are because the printer supplied more copies than ordered.

Public feedback

Public feedback on all the Spokes maps has always been excellent. Many examples are quoted on our website maps page (www.spokes.org.uk/spokes-maps) including...

“Your maps are invaluable and the detail amazing, far better than any other commercially available maps including the Ordnance Survey map. They are also excellent value. Congratulations to those involved in their research and production.” [email from satisfied customer, 2019]

“We’d like to buy 100 of the Spokes East Lothian maps ... They are very popular and we often distribute them when promoting cycling, especially to council staff.” [email from East Lothian Council, Sustainable Transport Officer, 2018]

“Very happy memories of following [@spokeslothian](https://www.spokeslothian.org.uk) suggested routes round E Lothian in early ’80s” [tweet by [@trappain](https://twitter.com/trappain), 2015]

“On a family ride to the Borders my brake cable broke – I checked the Spokes Midlothian map and found a shop in Penicuik (Motavation) – they couldn’t have been more helpful.” [SRD, July 2010]

“Fab cycle loop through East Lothian today – guided by the excellent [@SpokesLothian](https://www.spokeslothian.org.uk) map – Musselburgh, Haddington & back along the coast. Ace!” [tweeted by [@m_message](https://twitter.com/m_message), 2014]

“Hi guys! Your brilliant West Lothian map helped me out on my latest exploring adventure ?” [tweeted by [@crabbittcopy](https://twitter.com/crabbittcopy), 2014]

“22 miles later, back to Dunbar without getting lost thanks to the wonderful [@SpokesLothian](https://www.spokeslothian.org.uk) [#EastLothian](https://twitter.com/1VsmieR98S) cycle map” pic.twitter.com/1VsmieR98S [tweeted by [@backonmybike](https://twitter.com/backonmybike), 2013]

“Livingston today by bike/train (with [@SpokesLothian](https://www.spokeslothian.org.uk) map!). Walking talk with HMRC staff. Fab offroad paths.” [tweeted by [@HelenRambler](https://twitter.com/HelenRambler), 2013]

“Your maps are superb and I use them regularly in my work as a cycle writer” [2015: letter from Fergal MacErlean [@fme99](https://twitter.com/fme99) who writes the Bike Rides column in the Herald Magazine on Saturdays]