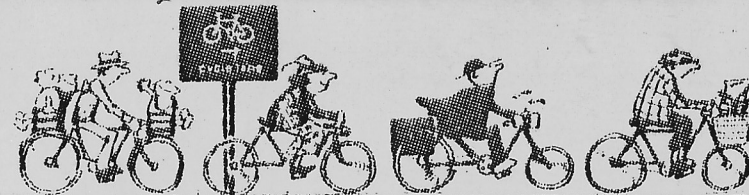
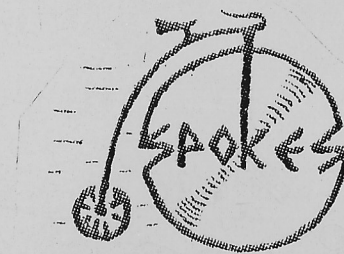
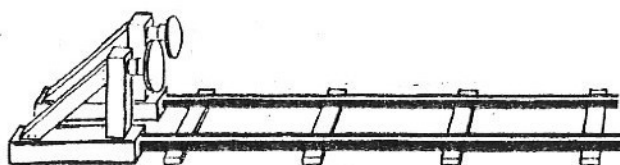


Rails to Trails



Cycleways and Footpaths on Railway Routes





Rails to Trails



SPOKES notes the recent recommendation of the Transportation Committee of Lothian Regional Council to proceed with the purchase of the disused railway beds safeguarded in the Structure plan from British Rail.

This decision, taken at a meeting of the Highways and Transport sub-committee on December 8th 1980, follows the Regional Council decision of 11th December 1979, which instructed officials to investigate the costs of acquiring the beds with a view to the construction of cycleways and footpaths or for a rapid transit system.

A price of £305,000 has been negotiated with British Rail for land including the former 'North Leith Line', with entry at 15th February 1981. Former railway land at Davidsons Mains and the Innocent Railway in Holyrood Park is already owned by the Regional Council. The District Council, in conjunction with the Scottish Development Agency, has already started to construct paths for walking and cycling on the Coburg/Warriston and Easter Road/Seafield lines, and paths alongside the Union Canal and the Water of Leith are used for walking and cycling. Edinburgh has the potential for an extensive network of off-street routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

SPOKES, the Lothian Cycling Campaign, compliments the Transportation Committee on their far sighted decision, and hopes that their plans will be put into effect as soon as possible. In this report we outline our ideas and suggestions for the possible treatment of this land, and describe how CYCLEBAG, the Bristol equivalent of SPOKES, have converted a stretch of disused railway line into a track for walking and cycling.

In the report, we emphasise the need to view the proposed cycleways as part of a city-wide network of cycle routes. In particular, the 'North Leith' route, if linked with the Coburg/Warriston route, could provide safe and convenient commuter links between the northern suburbs and the city centre. The network would be greatly enhanced by including certain cycle routes through parks, recommended routes in quiet back streets, etc. - but even without this the railway network will be extremely valuable for recreation and travel to work.

The possibility of using Manpower Services funded labour to construct the routes should be considered.

INTRODUCTION - The Need For Cycleways

Cycling is a cheap, healthy, efficient and pollution free means of transport for work and leisure.

More bicycles than cars were sold in Britain in 1979 - over 1.4 million - and the membership of the Cyclists' Touring Club reached 40,000, the highest total since the mid-fifties.

Despite these trends, cycle use in cities has not shown a dramatic increase. This is mainly due the deterrent effects of heavy traffic and dangerous junctions, and also partly to factors such as hills and the weather.

Although we cannot do much about the climate, the provision of safe, direct and flat routes will encourage the use of bicycles for both transport and leisure. Some special provisions for cyclists can be made in city streets, but Edinburgh is particularly fortunate in having a ready-made escape route for those who wish to avoid busy streets and motorised traffic.

Edinburgh possesses a network of disused railway lines, many of them in ideal locations for use as cycle paths and walkways. Now that the Regional Council is going ahead with the purchase of these routes to convert them for this purpose, SPOKES has prepared this report to put forward suggestions for the treatment of these routes.

SPOKES members have looked at some of the disused railway lines and have visited sites in other parts of the country where railway lines have been converted. Although our proposals relate mainly to cycling, none of them should conflict with the needs of pedestrians using the routes.

We would be very willing to discuss these ideas in more detail with the officials who are preparing plans for the disused railway lines.

INTRODUCTION - THE NEED FOR CYCLEWAYS

FEATURES OF DISUSED RAILWAYS

CONSTRUCTION OF CYCLE ROUTES

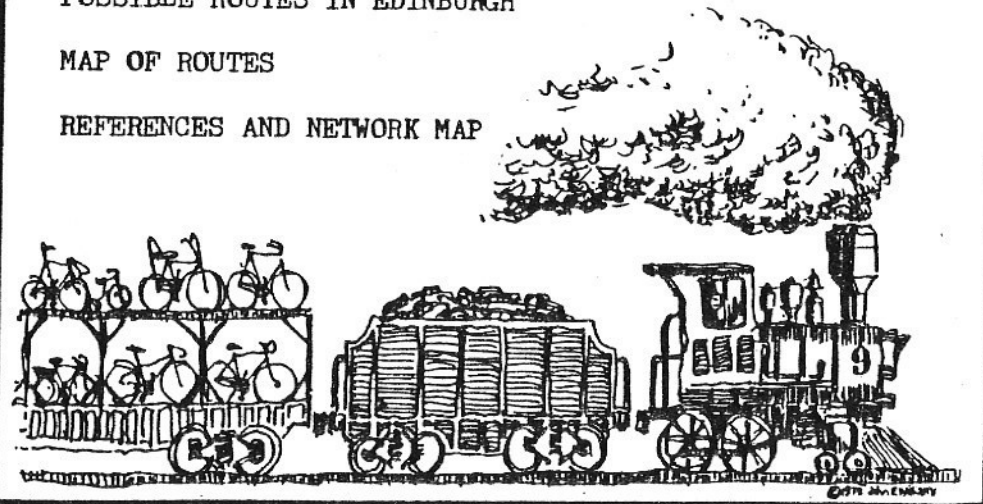
USAGE OF ROUTES

BITTON - BATH CYCLE PATH

POSSIBLE ROUTES IN EDINBURGH

MAP OF ROUTES

REFERENCES AND NETWORK MAP



Rails to Trails

Disused railway land is ideal for walking and cycling. The trackway provides a level, well-drained path, safe from the hazards of traffic. The land on either side of the track provides a refuge for the plants and animals which tend to be destroyed by modern farming and urban development.

Railway cuttings often reveal features of geological interest, while the views from the line can be impressive, particularly when there is an embankment. The disused railway can have valuable roles in both transport and recreation.

Many local authorities in Britain have exercised their option to purchase railway land for conversion into leisure trails, nature walks, long distance paths and walking/cycling routes, and these are greatly appreciated by the public.



Construction Methods

THE METHOD ADOPTED WILL DEPEND ON THE FINANCE AVAILABLE, THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BODY CARRYING OUT THE CONVERSION, AND THE STATE OF THE LINE TO BE CONVERTED.

Surface

The uneven surface of the track bed, even when covered with vegetation, does not encourage walking and is unsuitable for cycling and pram pushing.

Although the stones of the track bed could be removed, this will disrupt the drainage and it is cheaper and simpler to incorporate the track bed into a new surface.

An inexpensive surface material, such as crushed limestone ballast or similar stone dust can be laid on top of the track bed to blind the surface. An application of approx. 5cm of dust is needed on clean ballast, and less is necessary on ballast that is covered with vegetation.

When the small particles of limestone are wetted and rolled down they fill the gaps between the stones in the track bed. A hard and smooth surface is formed which is perfectly adequate for cycling, although it can be damaged by horses or motorised vehicles.

More expensive surface materials, such as tarmac or brick tiles, can be used in tunnels, areas where drainage is poor and in parts of the route that are to be used by horses.

For two-way mixed pedestrian/cyclist traffic, it is desirable to have a surfaced track three metres wide, although two metres are adequate except for sections where a lot of people will use the route.

Using the Routes

Cyclists and Pedestrians

Cyclists and pedestrians have mixed well on existing shared routes. Railway lines are wide enough to allow plenty of room for passing, as long as bordering vegetation is kept under control. Studies conducted in Peterborough by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory found little opposition to shared paths from pedestrians or cyclists.

Networks

It is important that the railway paths are considered as part of a city-wide network of cycle routes. Their development should be planned in relation to existing routes for cyclists, possible advisory cycle routes through quiet areas, cycle/bus lanes and paths alongside canals and through public parks. Some cyclists will be less likely to use cycle paths if they still have to travel on busy roads for part of their journey.

Busy roads and junctions on cycle routes should have traffic lights with a cycle/pedestrian phase, and pavement kerbs should be dropped where cyclists have to pass over them.

Maintenance

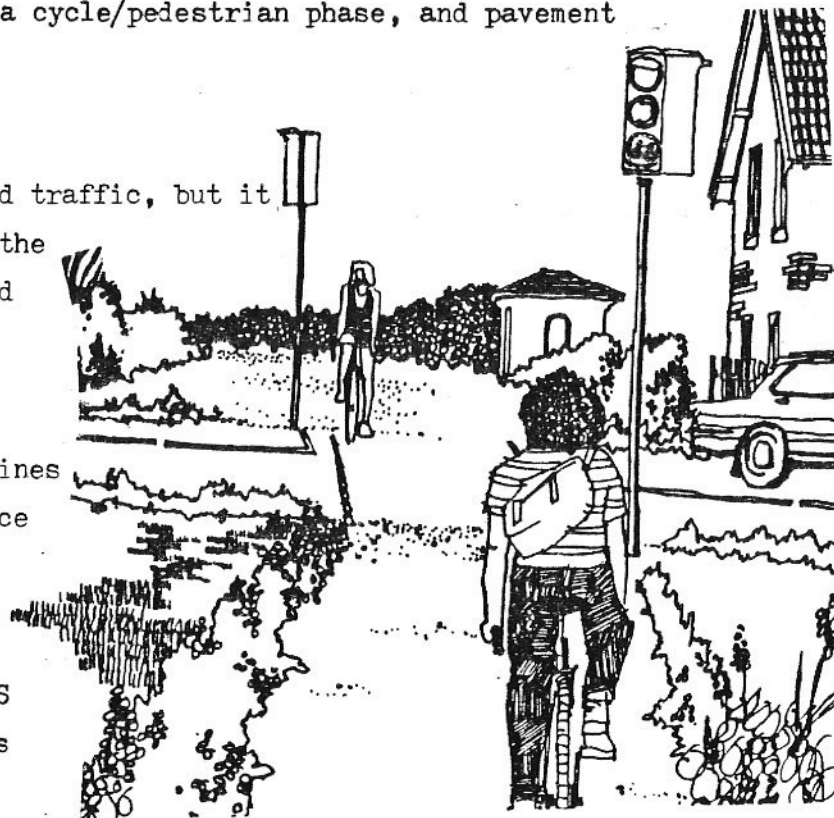
Cyclists and pedestrians cause far less damage to a surface than motorised traffic, but it is still important to keep the surface in good repair. Regular cleaning of the track is important, as cyclists will be deterred by broken glass, litter and dead leaves. Regular users of the track could help to keep it clean.

Safety

Problems of vandalism and violence already exist on the disused railway lines and the increased number of people using the track after conversion may reduce rather than increase these problems.

Promotion and Usage

The routes should be well signposted and given plenty of publicity (SPOKES will help). A descriptive leaflet, including details such as bus connections with the ends of the lines and wild life to be seen along the trail, will encourage leisure use. Local employers could be asked to encourage their workers to cycle to work, by providing secure parking and changing facilities.



Other Structures

FENCING

Fencing may be necessary in some sections to restrict access to and from the line and to prevent disturbance to adjacent property. In many places the steep sides of the cuttings and embankments and the bordering vegetation will be sufficient for this purpose, and it should certainly not be assumed that the whole line needs new fences.

Some bridge parapets will need higher railings.

DRAINAGE AND LIGHTING

The existing drainage system is inadequate or has been disrupted in some places, and new drains will be needed.

Tunnel sections and particularly dark areas may need to be lit.

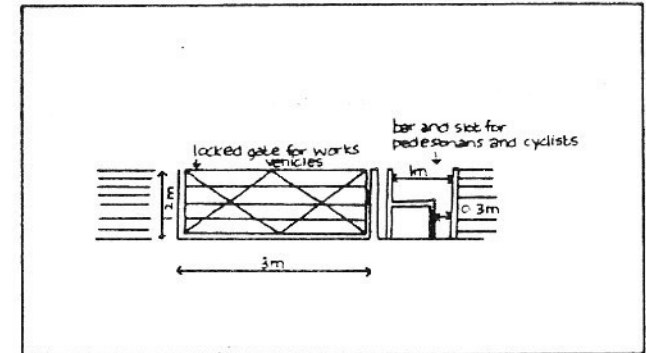
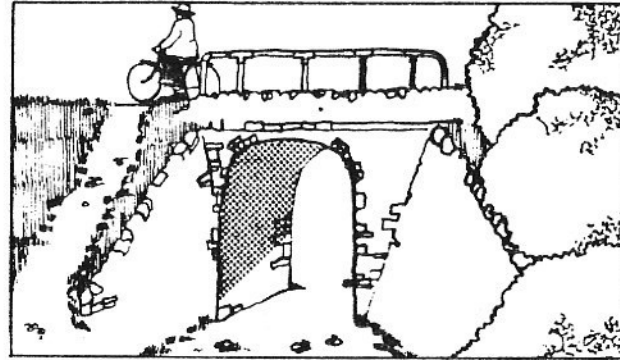
ACCESS POINTS

Good access points are important. They should allow the public to enter the route at regular intervals along the route as well as at the beginning and the end. If frequent access points are not provided then people may attempt to enter or leave the line through private property.

Access points should allow pedestrians, cyclists and people pushing prams to enter, while making it impossible for motor cyclists, horses and other unauthorised users to gain access. One possible type is shown above,

The access to former stations will be suitable in some places, although it may be necessary to add ramps to flights of steps to help cyclists. In areas where the level of the line is above or below the surrounding roads, long approach paths can be cut into the slopes parallel to the line. These paths should be properly surfaced and not too steep, and should lead out onto quiet side streets where possible.

On routes with substantial recreational usage, it may be necessary to provide car parking at one end for those who come by car to use the route.



BITTON TO BATH RAILWAY ROUTE



Cyclebag, a Bristol-based cycle action group, have converted a disused railway line into a cycle/walkway for leisure use. The voluntary group obtained money from commercial sponsors, the Silver Jubilee fund and from their members to convert 8 km of disused line between Bitton and Bath. Construction work was carried out by workers funded by the Manpower Services Commission and by volunteers.

The railway land was bought from British Rail by the local authorities. Cyclebag submitted a planning application for the route in December 1978 and obtained a five-year lease of the land for a peppercorn rent, in return for agreeing to carry out the conversion. The work was started as soon as planning permission was obtained in June 1979, and the route was opened in March 1980.

Construction involved laying 2,000 tonnes of grit and compacting this to form the surface of the path. In addition, fences and drains were installed and gates, stiles and cattle grids fixed. The project cost approximately £1,000 per kilometre, including the supervision of volunteers.

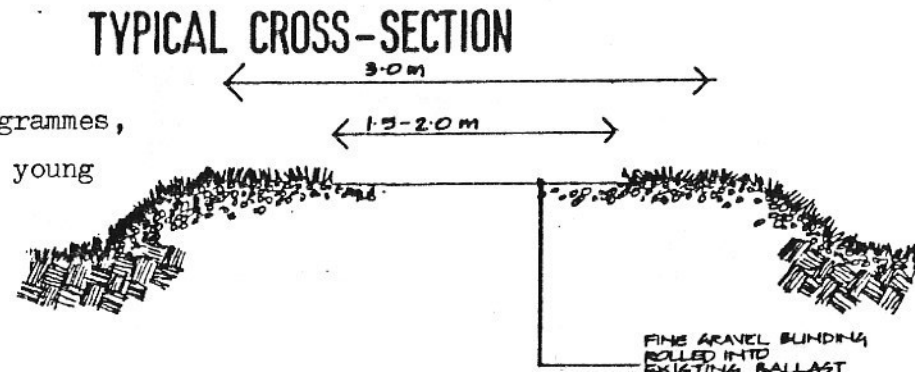
More than 1,000 people per day used the route on the first full weekend after opening, and it is predicted that half a million trips will be made on the new path in the first year of operation. The route is used mainly for leisure purposes.

Although local police were initially worried about the problem of patrolling the track, no rape or mugging has taken place so far, and they are now quite keen on the idea of cycle walkways. Local residents help by watching out for misuse of the track, and regular users keep it clean and in good order.

Cyclebag are now involved in the construction of a riverside route in Bristol, and they have plans for the conversion of other railway lines in the South West of England. A limited company, Sustainable Transport, has been established to help cycle action groups to undertake similar projects, and SPOKES can call on its expertise.

Although local authorities will play the major role in the conversion of disused railways and other suitable routes, it might be useful for local cycle action groups and other voluntary bodies to become involved in these projects, and, in some cases, to initiate and construct the routes themselves.

Environmental improvement projects such as railway line conversion are suitable for Manpower Services Commission programmes, and the type of work involved can be undertaken by unskilled young people in the Youth Opportunities Programme.



ROSEBURN-DAVIDSONS MAINS and CRAIGLEITH-LEITH DISUSED RAIL LINES

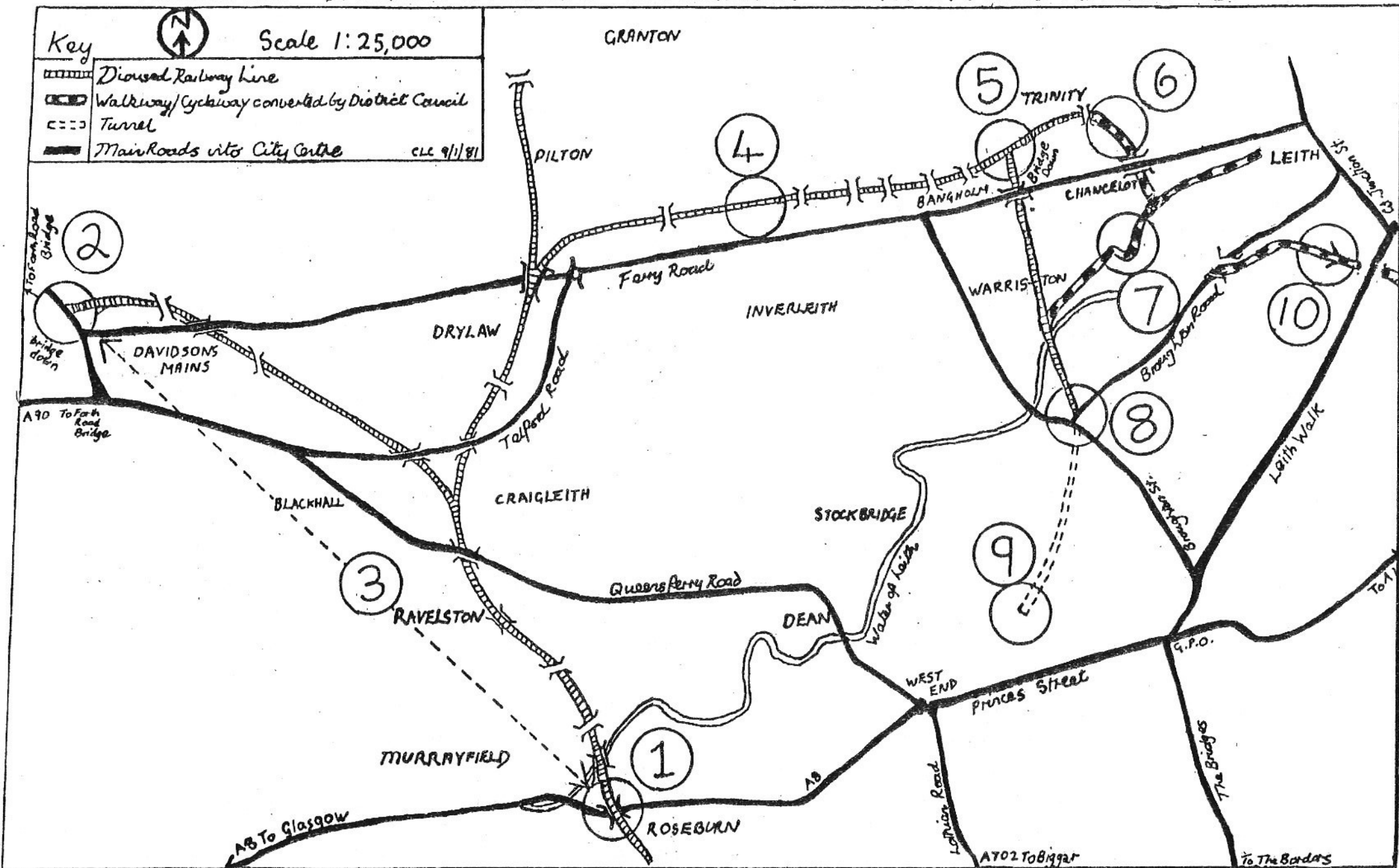
Key



Scale 1:25,000

- Disused Railway Line
- Walkway/Cycleway converted by District Council
- Tunnel
- Main Roads into City Centre

CLC 9/1/81



A Network of Cycle Routes

The map on the opposite page shows how a network of cycle routes could be formed using the railway lines. If access points are provided at suitable places (ideally, wherever the railway line crosses over or under a road), the network will be extremely useful to cyclists living in the north of Edinburgh and working in the centre.

The following notes refer to the numbers marked on the map.

1. At Roseburn Station there is access to the line from Wester Coates Terrace, a quiet side street. It would also be useful to have an entry at the other side of the bridge, to allow cyclists to avoid crossing the busy road.

2. The railway line ends in a car park at Safeways store. A cycle/pedestrian crossing over the busy road would allow cyclists to reach quiet side streets and a back route to the Forth Bridge.

3. This section of the route could be done first, and it would be a useful link between Davidsons Mains and Haymarket.

4. Part of the railway bed at this point is fenced off for a car park used by employees of a local firm. A cycleway might encourage some of them to cycle to work?

5. Reconstruction of this bridge would allow users to cross the gap in the route. Ramps leading down the embankment to the lower level at both sides would allow a connection with the railway line running straight to Heriothill.

6. The railway cutting has been levelled over to extend Victoria Park, but the District Council has powers to allow cycling on paths in parks.

7. The detour to avoid the railway line that is still in use involves a steep slope that could be tricky in

7. The detour to avoid the railway line that is still in use involves a steep slope that entails dismounting and could be tricky in bad weather. A simple level crossing would be preferable.

8. If possible, one of the exits from this section should be on Broughton Road, possibly through the planned retail store, to avoid the busy junction at the bottom of Cannonmills.

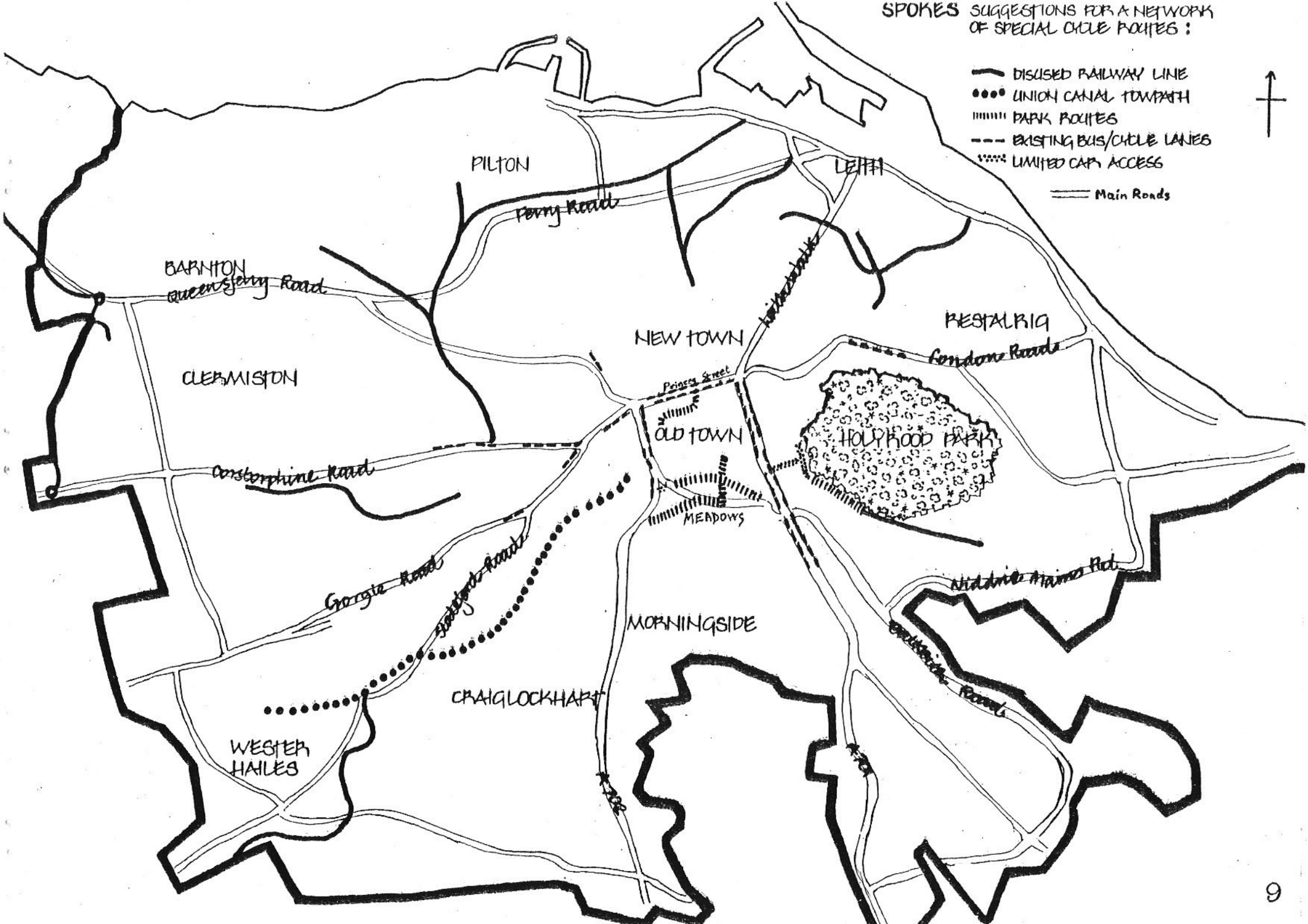
9. Scotland Street tunnel is a link with the centre of the city.

10. Possible link with the Easter Road/Seafield section. Bridges over Easter Road and Leith Walk are down, but links at ground level should be possible.

This map and the map showing suggestions for a network(overleaf), give a general picture. The SPOKES planning group has drawn up proposals showing how cyclists could be catered for on busy city streets. Such matters are not discussed in this report, which is concerned with the potential of the disused railway routes.

SPOKES
SUGGESTIONS FOR A NETWORK
OF SPECIAL CYCLE ROUTES :

- DISUSED RAILWAY LINE
- UNION CANAL TOWPATH
- ||||| PARK ROUTES
- EXISTING BUS/CYCLE LANES
- ||||| LIMITED CAR ACCESS
- == Main Roads



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Ian Maxwell, maps by Carol Crawford & Grazyna Portal, assisted by Peter Teague, Dave du Feu, Sue Downie, Alison Spears and members of the SPOKES Cyclepath group. Thanks are also due to John Grimshaw, Bill Clarke and Dave Sproxton of Cyclebag, and Mike Chown.

If you want to send us your ideas about the construction of cycle routes in Lothian, or to join and help in our efforts in this area, please write to SPOKES (Railway Group), 2 Ainslie Place, Edinburgh (225 7752).

You can also help by writing in support of these ideas and with your own comments to your Regional Councillor, (phone 229 9292 for the address), or to Councillor Cathy Filsell, Convenor of the Transportation Committee, Lothian Regional Council, Parliament Square, Edinburgh.
