

Making Scotland a cycle-friendly nation: a manifesto

“The great city is not the one that has highways, but one where a child on a tricycle or bicycle can go safely everywhere.” Enrique Peñalosa

Cycling should be the obvious solution to many of Scotland's ills. It is cheap, healthy, democratic and convivial, benefits local economies and makes the streets a safer place for all. Cyclist benefit themselves – physiologically their bodies are, on average, many years ‘younger’ than non-cyclists’, and they suffer less from the ‘western’ diseases that beset Scotland so[1] – and they benefit others, cutting congestion and improving air quality.[2] And yet bikes barely seem to be taken seriously as a mode of transport while the majority of Scots don't cycle, simply because they feel it is too risky.[3] Although statistically the benefits of cycling vastly outweigh the risks, poor design and maintenance of roads and cycle routes, dangerous driving, and lack of enforcement mean those risks remain unacceptably high. Making Scotland safe for cycling and walking, and – more importantly – making it *feel* safe, could transform our cities and villages and the lives of the people who live in them.[4]

The Scottish government has already made a start. It led the world in signing up to a low-carbon future,[5] part of which will include much higher levels of cycling. The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS)[6] set the target of having 10% of all journeys in Scotland made by bike by 2020. Whilst many of the individual points in CAPS are welcome, CAPS does not add up to a coherent, researched and costed path to reach the 2020 target - and nor has it received anything like the necessary funding. Furthermore, even the existing funding levels are under threat.[7] The history of UK cycling policy is full of strategies which have been quietly shelved when it becomes clear that their targets are not going to be met. We hope the Scottish government will not join Westminster in this hall of shame.

We call on all Scotland's politicians, of all parties, to sign up to the following eight point manifesto in order to make cycling a realistic choice for everyone, from eight to eighty – and show the rest of the UK that cycling doesn't just belong on continental Europe, but in the country where it all began:

- 1) Proper funding for cycling.
- 2) Design cycling into Scotland's roads.
- 3) Safer speeds where people live, work and play
- 4) Integrate cycling into local transport strategies
- 5) Sensible road traffic law and enforcement
- 6) Reduce the risk of HGVs to cyclists and pedestrians
- 7) A strategic and joined-up programme of road user training
- 8) Solid research on cycling to support policy-making

1. Proper funding for cycling, with a high and rising share of the transport budget committed to cycling nationally, and locally.

If cycling is to reach 10% of all trips then there needs to be serious investment. We ask the Scottish government to join Edinburgh City Council and commit 5% of transport revenue and capital budgets to cycling. Further, local authorities should also commit a share of their transport revenue and capital budgets to cycling at least in proportion with the percentage of people cycling to work or school in their area until in total, spending on cycling from all sources reaches a target of £25 per head per year.

To put this into perspective, 5% of the £2bn annual Scottish transport budget equates roughly to £100m, or £20 per head, which is comparable to the £1.32bn over 11 years that the Low Carbon Scotland[8] report proposed spending on active travel (including walking). At the moment in Scotland actual spending is nearer £2-£3 per head. In contrast, in 2010, the Netherlands spent €30 per head (around £25) on installing and upgrading its cycling infrastructure which is already streets ahead of anything found here.[9] Cycling England's 2005-2011 Cycling City and Towns project invested around £10 per head and achieved significant growth in everyday cycle use, saving around £2.5 for every £1 spent, principally in reduced congestion.[10] Other studies have shown that money invested on cycling and walking networks can pay back up to four to five times the amount spent, a better rate of return than any other transport investment.[11] If cycling levels rise to 13%, the benefit to Scotland would be between £1-2bn.[12]

2. Design cycling into all of Scotland's roads and junctions, with improved and strengthened national design guidelines in line with best practice internationally.

Improved provision for cycling must include a commitment to transforming Scotland's roads and junctions. The existing design guidelines, Cycling by Design,[13] should be revised in line with best practice internationally – particularly drawing on the experience of the Netherlands where 25% of trips are by bike.[14] These standards should be incorporated into the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and local authority road design guidance and should form minimum national standards for any new road or any road being substantially maintained or upgraded, whether local or trunk road. In addition, the Scottish Government should investigate whether it is possible for these standards to be made binding on roads authorities. Each local authority should commit to creating a dense network of direct and dedicated cycling routes with separation from traffic where needed, particularly on busy roads. Cycling infrastructure should be suitable for cyclists of all kinds, whether fast commuters or children on their way to school. Importantly, it should not bring cyclists into conflict with either pedestrians or heavy traffic. Such designs don't just benefit cyclists, they benefit everyone who uses the roads.[15]

3. Safer speeds where people live, work and play

There are significant road safety benefits to a 20 mph speed limit.[16] In residential areas, the presumption should be that roads authorities should apply 20mph speed limits as the norm in these areas. Lower speed limits should also be considered for unclassified rural roads where all road traffic faces a completely unacceptable risk of accident.

4. Build increased cycling into local transport strategies

Local councils are best placed to know how cycling and active travel can be improved in its own area. Each local authority should be required produce its own local cycling action plan with clear targets to increase cycling levels in line with the national target of 10%, using the existing cycling levels as a guideline. Funding to support this should be ring-fenced and councils required to report against their progress every year. As well as working towards a coherent joined up network (see point 2), plans should include integration with public transport, including buses and trains, making cycling a seamless and practical part of even longer journeys. Local authorities should take cyclists into account when drawing up their maintenance plans, with a duty to give equal consideration to off-road tracks and infrastructure when planning gritting, road cleaning and repairs. Resurfacing roads and fixing potholes should take cyclists' needs into consideration as well as motorists.

5. Improved road traffic law and enforcement

While acknowledging that road traffic law is effectively reserved to the UK Government, traffic law must do more to protect the most vulnerable road users such as cyclists, pedestrians, children and older people. The CAPS already includes a commitment to investigate the feasibility of introducing 'strict liability' – we would reiterate that this must not be sidelined. Restrictions on parking in bike lanes and on pavements should be strictly enforced and, given a lack of police action on these issues, those local authorities that have not requested decriminalisation of parking enforcement should be encouraged to do so. Where 20mph zones have been brought in they should be properly policed and sentencing must be appropriate when drivers cause harm

6. A comprehensive package to eliminate the risk of HGVs to cyclists and pedestrians.

This is a pressing problem. Heavy lorries are associated with a disproportionately high risk of death or very serious injury to cyclists and pedestrians. Despite being just 6% of road traffic, lorries are involved in around 20% of all cyclists' fatalities.[17] CAPS already has targets for reducing cycling casualties but the onus must not just be on the cyclists to keep themselves safe. The Scottish government should engage with the UK Department of Transport with a view to developing a comprehensive package of measures to reduce the risk to cyclists and pedestrians, based on up to date evidence of what works. These might include better training, mirrors, sensors and warnings, or limitations on

movements of large freight vehicles during the morning and evening peaks. Equally they might include complete redesign of junctions to remove conflict between bikes and lorries.

7. A strategic and properly funded programme of road user training:

Much is made of developing training for cyclists in the CAPS yet Bikeability is not fully funded, and Cycling Scotland is dependent on volunteers to carry out vital training in schools. But training should not be confined to children – nor even just to cyclists. All Scottish residents should have access to affordable cycle training, whether children, adult returning cyclists, and those in later life. Further, HGV drivers, bus drivers and other professional drivers should be required to take an on-bike qualification (or a theoretical module if physically unable to cycle) as part of their licensing requirement and be made aware of the needs of both pedestrians and cyclists, and the Scottish government should press the UK government to introduce these measures .[18]

8. Solid research and statistics on cycling

We can only improve decision-making and policy development with solid research. The information that records how many people are cycling is very poor at the national level and inconsistent at the local level. This makes it difficult to monitor what is happening and which interventions have greatest impact. At a minimum counts should be carried out twice a year using standardised protocols for data collection and handling, taking into account cyclists using off-road facilities as well as those on the public highway. Where possible electronic counters with public displays should be used, as in Copenhagen and other cities, which count the number of cyclists passing through certain areas as these can provide both feedback and encouragement. These would become a talking point and a public reminder to cyclists that they are part of a growing band taking control of their health – and their freedom.

There is all to play for and so little to lose. Proper investment in cycling is not a zero-sum game. It will bring so much more than the expenditure put in, benefits which will gradually be reflected in a changing, healthier population. We all know our natural resources are not infinite and we would irresponsible not to think of ways of making them last, but cycling is hardly a hair-shirt option. Rather it is a joyous way to get about - but one that has become confined to a hardy few because of the conditions on our roads. From Kirkpatrick MacMillan onwards, Scotland has a long history of popular cycling which has been all but forgotten. We believe these times can come again and Scotland can once more be a beacon for the world.

Work as if you are in the early days of a better nation – Alistair Gray

[1] Cavill and Davis (2009) [Cycling and Health:what's the evidence?](#) Cycling

England.

[2] an area where Scotland risks missing its EU targets according to SEPA, see SEPA (2011), [Consultation on Air Quality Plans to meet EU Limit Values for Nitrogen dioxide \(NO2\) in Scotland](#)

[3] DfT (2009) [Exploring Public Attitudes to Climate Change and Travel Choices: deliberative research](#)

[4] See Pucher, Dill and Handy (2010) [Infrastructure, Programs and Policies to increase Bicycling: an international review](#), Preventative Medicine 50 (2010) S106- S125

and Sloman, L., Cavill, N., Cope, A., Muller, L. and Kennedy, A. (2009) [Analysis and Synthesis of Evidence on the Effects of Investment in Six Cycling Demonstration Towns](#), Report for Department for Transport and Cycling England.

[5] [Low Carbon Scotland: the report on proposals and policies](#)

[6] [Cycling Action Plan for Scotland](#), Scottish Government

[7] <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2012/02/scottish-budget-improved/>

[8] [Low Carbon Scotland: the report on proposals and policies](#)

[9] Fietsberaad News report (2010) [Jaarlijks 487 miljoen euro voor de fiets](#) (in Dutch, but total spending from both local and national government was €487m)

[10] Cycling England (2010) [Cycling Demonstration Towns: Development of Benefit-cost ratios](#)

[11] K. Sælensminde (2004), "[Cost-benefit analyses of walking and cycling track networks taking into account insecurity, health effects and external costs of motorized traffic](#)", Transportation Research Part A 38 (2004) 593–606

[12] Scottish Parliament Finance Committee '[Paths for All](#)'

[13] Transport Scotland [Cycling By Design](#)

[14] See for example the principles of Sustainable Safety (see SWOV [Sustainable Safety website](#))

http://www.swov.nl/UK/Research/Kennisbank/Inhoud/sustainable_safety.htm

and Van Goeverden, C.D. & Godefrooij, T. (2011) [The Dutch Reference Study: Cases of interventions in bicycle infrastructure reviewed in the framework of Bikeability](#)

[15] For example, in New York, crashes resulting in injuries fell by 40% for all road users – bikes, cars and pedestrians – where protected bike lanes were installed http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/bike_lanes_memo.pdf

[16] Grundy *et al.* (2009) [Effect of 20 mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986-2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis](#), BMJ 2009;339:b4469

[17] Morgan *et al.* (2010) [Deaths of Cyclists in London: trends from 1992-2006](#) BMC Public Health 2010, 10:699

[18] On bike training has already been included as part of HGV drivers professional training but it is not compulsory – see

<http://road.cc/content/news/43896-thousands-more-lorry-drivers-line-bike-cycle-awareness-training>
