

PE1653/G

Petitioner submission of 1 March 2018

Response to Scottish Government submission on 31 January 2018

Views on the establishment of a legal framework for active travel infrastructure

Firstly, I would like to commend the government for having made positive strides to improve active travel in Scotland by doubling the active travel budget, establishing a Cycling Action Plan for 2030 as well as an Active Travel Task Force. It is also very heartening to hear that there are projects such as the dualling of the A9 and A96 and the non-motorised provision for active travel on the new Sheriffhall roundabout. However, these are stand out examples of good practice and from my experience as a resident of both Edinburgh and Midlothian, the exception to the norm.

Why should the government put active travel provision central to all road transport projects - except of course obvious ones such as motorways where cyclists are prohibited?

- 'For the first time, transport is now the highest emitting sector of the economy, responsible for around 26 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gases, with the energy sector just behind on 25 per cent. The main source of emissions in the transport sector was the use of petrol and diesel in road vehicles, particularly in passenger cars, according to the data.'¹
- Air pollution levels are a 'public health crisis.' There are now 38 zones in Scotland where safety standards for air quality are regularly broken.
- Health and wellbeing: When the British Medical Journal states that 'public health will be improved by policies that increase active commuting, particularly cycling, such as the creation of cycle lanes, cycle hire or purchase schemes, and better provision for cycles on public transport,'² surely then it is time for strong policy action from government?

It is clear that Scotland has the policies, but it is the action that is lacking, as this press statement from Brian Whittle MSP indicates:

"The Scottish Government seem to have dropped the ball when it comes to promoting active travel. We need to be encouraging more people to walk or cycle, particularly for short journeys. Aside from the health benefits of being more active, we can also reduce pollution, particularly in built up areas, and potentially even develop new tourism routes using cycle routes and walking paths.

The Maybole by-pass represents a prime opportunity to develop active travel routes in Ayrshire, yet the Scottish Government appear to have ignored their own policy and failed to consider it in their plans for the route.'

¹ https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/news-analysis/3026065/uk-greenhouse-gases-fall-five-per-cent-as-transport-becomes-highest-emitter?utm_medium=email&utm_content&utm_campaign=BG.Weekly_RL.EU.A.U&utm_source=BG.DCM.Editors_Updates&utm_term&im_company&companysize=1000+to+1999

² Celis-Morales, Carlos A.; Lyall, Donald M.; Welsh, P.; Anderson, J.; Steell, L.; Guo, L. Maldonado, R.; Mackay, D. F.; Pell, J. P.; Sattar, N.; Gill, Jason M. R.; (2017). *Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: prospective cohort study*. BMJ 2017;357:j1456

Unfortunately, the response from the Scottish Government does not indicate how it will ensure that their active travel policies are enacted, at no point have they stated an alternative to legislation. If they do not legislate to ensure active travel is central to new transport developments, what are they proposing to do to ensure it will not be business as usual with increasing levels of air pollution, CO₂e equivalent emissions and congestion?

As the Maybole bypass example shows there is no consistency in active travel provision throughout Scotland. Another issue is connecting central economic hubs such as Edinburgh and Glasgow to surrounding areas from which people commute. For example, the Big City Deal, announced on the 20th July 2017 to 'drive investment and address inclusion' in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland Region has set aside £140 million for improvements to the Sheriffhall roundabout. However, the DMRB Stage 2 Traffic and Economic Assessment Report dated March 2017 puts the cost for Option B, the preferred option for the new Sheriffhall roundabout at £73,373,615 or £87,325,125 including optimism bias. When Daniel Johnson MSP asked the Transport Minister about funding for improving cycle links in relation to the Sheriffhall roundabout upgrade he was redirected to the City Deal Transport Project Manager at Edinburgh City Council. There was further redirecting to the Senior Manager Transport Networks at Edinburgh City Council who indicated that their active travel budget is essentially committed for several years to come and does not cover the area in question. He recommended contacting a Senior Consultant from Midlothian Council who stated that there are some plans to improve cycle access on the Midlothian side of the Sheriffhall, towards the Tesco Hardengreen roundabout. However, they indicated that there should be a collective responsibility from Transport Scotland and the City of Edinburgh to improve their routes to/from Edinburgh and that meetings in the past with representatives from both organisations have indicated that routes to and from Midlothian are not a priority. Transport by definition links regions but each region has different priorities and focuses, meaning a cohesive approach for active travel is particularly challenging. Surely the City Deal can address these issues? As no one has yet taken responsibility for the transport/Sheriffhall part of The City Deal, will the Government take responsibility and ensure that the £50 million surplus is used to create proper segregated cycle routes that connect Edinburgh and Midlothian? My husband commutes to Livingston from Edinburgh by bicycle nearly every single day and I commute to Gorebridge by bike as often as I can. Will the Scottish Government change the way it models and plans for new road infrastructure in a way that considers cycling as a viable means of transport?