



BULLETIN - Spring 2007

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

Welcome...

The clocks have just gone back, spring is officially here, no better time to get on your bike. So in the five minutes before you set off have a quick read through this, Aberdeen Cycle Forum's Third newsletter. Since our summer 2006 publication we have been tirelessly working on your behalf, trying to improve the cyclists' lot in Aberdeen. In this issue we have an update on recent consultations, cycle parking in the city, no less than three local transport strategies, dates for your diaries and much more.

New in this Edition - WEB-LINX

We can't fit everything in the newsletter, and some web addresses are so long and fiddly to type in, the solution is WEB-LINX. Where you see "WEB-LINX" in the text simply visit the ACF website, click the WEB-LINX button in the menu and enter the number to learn more.

News

Stop Pinching Cyclists

As cyclists, we know that traffic islands all too often create "pinch points", narrowing the road and creating the risk that we will get squeezed as impatient motorists overtake through the island. Not a pleasant experience – and not something that will encourage new cyclists to keep on cycling.



Within the city, ACF would like to see more use of pelican and zebra crossings for pedestrians, which do not narrow the road, and we have been pursuing this with the council for some time. Interestingly, many traffic islands in Aberdeen are placed for traffic calming rather than to help pedestrians cross the road. National research on "narrowings" and cyclists reflects our position. Edinburgh does not use islands for traffic calming for this very reason.

You can help! If a new "pinch point" has appeared on your route and you think it's dangerous to cyclists then why not write/email to object, either to your local councillor (WEB-LINX:11), or to

Graeme McKenzie, Aberdeen City Council
St. Nicholas House, Aberdeen AB10 1AR
gmckenzie@aberdeency.gov.uk

All Strategy (and no Action)

Are you sitting comfortably? There are currently THREE transport strategies under development which have an impact on Cyclists. The National Transport Strategy (NTS) was recently published, and it was good to see it affirming the importance of cycling for short trips. The Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) covers the City and Shire – the draft certainly mentions cycling, supporting the idea of developing strategic cycle commuting routes (great), but overall cycling doesn't appear to have had much thought given to it. You can see ACF's response to the draft RTS on our website (WEB-LINX:12). Finally, guess what, just so the council does not feel left out, it's the Local Transport Strategy, but to prolong the suspense, this is after the local elections. Oh, and finally, there is supposed to be a Local Cycling strategy. ACF offered to write this but bizarrely our offer was turned down.

Council Matters (Honest)

First the good news... The ongoing, "finished by Christmas" road works on Market Street have revealed a new mandatory cycle lane – although it ends half way, yes we pointed this out at the design

stage and are pushing for it to go all the way! You can give us feedback on Market Street via our e-consultation on the website (WEB-LINX:13).

Consultants are also looking into the feasibility of creating a shared use cycle path alongside the River Dee (on the North side), from Victoria Bridge towards RGU. They will need to come up with good ideas as to how cyclists will be



expected to safely cut across the various bridges, but it could at long last begin to realise the value that the Dee as a corridor could give to cyclists and walkers.

The not so good news is the various proposals for the city centre pedestrianisation could mean a series of right turn bans that will create real problems for cyclists. A bus gate proposal could make north-south movement across the Market St/Guild St junction impossible for cyclists, thus negating the investment in the Market St cycle lane, clearly a case of lack of joined up thinking if ever there was one.

And a perhaps the biggest disappointment of all is that most of the £375,000 allocated to cycle projects via Nestrans this year (mainly for a Kingswells – Hazelhead cycle route and for the developing route along the Don to Dyce) has been lost to cycling because the work couldn't be commissioned in time for the money to be spent ahead of the financial year end.

During the winter ACF was aware of several incidents due to the poor gritting of offroad cycle paths - the reason for this is the council treats cycle lanes as a lower priority than roads, after recent developments there is the possibility (and only a possibility!) of getting some key offroad cycle paths into the 2007/8 winter gritting program. if you have any suggestions get in contact and let us know

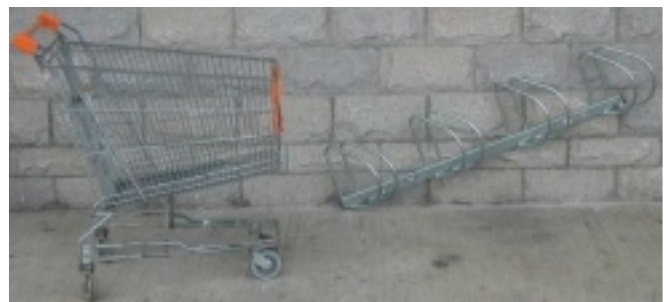
Taking a Stand

For many, the lack of somewhere to store / lock your bike at the start or end of a journey is reason not to use or indeed own a bike. Provision of cycle parking in new developments in the city is patchy; a survey conducted by ACF revealed that of 18 flat

developments granted planning permission, only 8 had provision for cycle parking as a condition of gaining planning permission and only 5 showed cycle storage on the plans. And of course, who can forget the Council's brand new and shiny Cove library – with no cycle parking!

Over the last few months, ACF has worked with the council to create some supplementary planning guidelines. These define both the number and, most importantly, the type of cycle parking to be installed at all new residential and commercial developments. This should see an end to the cheap “wheel buckler” types, or indeed no facilities, we currently see at many new stores.

But what about buildings which are already there? For existing commercial property ACF is in correspondence with many of the large retailers and commercial landlords in Aberdeen encouraging them to provide stands or “upgrade” existing facilities. As there were no planning conditions at the time of construction, this process relies entirely on the goodwill of the owner (we are currently at 15 letters and have achieved one stand, getting the regulations changed was clearly a better use of effort). Of these B&Q in Garthdee has generated



the most correspondence, 5 letters so far, and the worst outcome! B&Q responded by indicating they “knew what they were doing” then replacing the existing poor stand with a terrible one that continues to fall off the wall. Not bad for a company that has a policy to “... provide our customers with a choice of shopping routes as alternatives to the private car...” (read it yourself WEB-LINX:14)

An interesting pilot study is being carried out by Edinburgh City Council to provide wall-mounted cycle parking at the bottom of the main stairs in tenement stairwells in Edinburgh. There are several possible designs, but basically the bikes are hung or mounted vertically against the wall and secured. The system chosen in Edinburgh cost around £500

per location, with room for about 6 bikes. ACF continues to watch this scheme, It would be great to see something similar tried in Aberdeen.

Cyclists in Bus Lanes

First of all lets not forget that they are shared bus/cycle/taxi lanes and you have just as much right to be there as the bus. ACF recently completed an e-consultation exercise on interactions between cyclists and bus drivers in the city. On the whole relations are good – but the key to getting on better is awareness on all sides. ACF recently met with First Bus' operations director and have supplied some material to further improve the driver training program. We would like to thank Warrington Cycle Campaign for the idea behind this initiative. You can read more at the website. WEB-LINX:15

Coming Up Soon

The Elections!

Yes it's that time again, if you have not worked it out yet on 3rd of May there are polls for both the local council and the Scottish Executive, all the council seats are up for grabs so there are bound to be some changes in both the parties represented on the council and in the members of the key committees. Now ACF would never dream of telling you how to vote, however we thought it might be interesting to see what the views of the various parties and candidates are on cycling, both nationally and in the city. You can read the results on the website, in the week before polling day WEB-LINX:16

Bike Week 2007

It is never too early to start planning for Bike Week which this year runs from June 16 - 23rd, unlike the working week there are two weekends in bike week ACF will be running its popular Commuter Challenge again (last year participants collectively chalked up over 3000 miles!). Watch the ACF website for details nearer the time. But what makes Bike Week really work is individual organisations arranging their own event for Bike Week – maybe a bike breakfast, or a lunchtime run, or experienced

cyclists offering to "buddy" less confident work colleagues in a cycle commute. So, why not organise something for Bike Week at your workplace or college or wherever? Check out our bikeweek website for ideas (WEB-LINX:17).

New in the Saddle?

Try Cycling

If you are relatively new in the saddle, or have not cycled in the city for some time and feel you have lost road confidence, why not TRY CYCLING. Every Sunday ACF and CTC trained cycle trainers run short rides (<3hrs), it's the ideal way to gain confidence, meet new people and have fun. Meet 10:00hrs at the Pond in Duthie park, see WEB-LINX:18 for more information



Some Tips

Our very own editor Fiona a recent convert to two wheels offers some tips for those venturing out for the first time (with apologies to the "Think" Adverts WEB-LINX:19)

Be visible. Ride well clear of the kerb, wear bright clothing and use lights after dark or in poor weather conditions.

Show drivers what you plan to do. Always look and signal before you start, stop or turn.

Ride a straight line past parked cars rather than dodging between them.

And whilst it may be tempting Don't jump red lights., ride on pavements or cross pelican crossings or ride the wrong way up one way streets!

Critical Mass in Edinburgh?

A recent survey in Edinburgh this winter by Spokes, one of the countrys oldest cycle campaign groups revealed 14% of all rush hour vehicles along Lothian Road (a major route into the city from the South) were bikes, the question is obviously WHY? Free senior citizen's bus pass in hand ACF's Dave Lindsey set off to find out.

Edinburgh would seem to be on the verge of 'Critical Mass', not as in the sense of enabling a sustainable nuclear reaction, nor in the sense of riding up and down Union street making a nuisance of yourselves once per month, but simply getting enough cyclists on the street that people are aware of their presence. More cyclists = more awareness and respect from drivers = more cyclists = you get the point by now.

So, how can this be explained? It can't be the weather: Edinburgh is just as exposed to wind and weather as we are here; it's more hilly, has many more cobbled streets, a greater preponderance of buses and a rush hour which is substantially worse than ours, remember the referendum on congestion charging in Edinburgh a few years ago? Oh and before anyone shouts it's not a major "student route" I guess maybe they have a City Council which has been more consistently proactive towards cycling than ours. Edinburgh city council have had a full time council cycling officer for many years and they published their own cycling facilities design guide some time ago. Unlike our granite city, the sandstone one has an earmarked annual budget for cycling provision which, as anyone who works in business can tell you, leads to a more strategic planning framework for development of facilities year on year.

That's not to say that everything in the 2-wheel garden is lovely; in the central 'heritage' area, despite the opposition of Spokes, cycle lanes and advanced stop lines (ASL's) lanes are discretely coloured in fawn & black, so as not to disturb the look & feel of the place. Also, a lot of road markings are getting pretty ancient and could do with a lick of paint. Even so, it's an indication of how long they've been in the business of trying to make the cyclists' lot a safer & happier one. 2 cheers at least for Edinburgh!

Learn More about Spokes at their website
WEB-LINX:18

And Finally...

Thats the way to do it...

What will happen if a six lane elevated motorway carrying 160,000 cars a day through a city is demolished, in order to restore the underlying river and create a 5 mile long green park through the city? Traffic chaos of course, well not quite. This actually happened in Seoul in 2005. Most of the traffic just disappeared – people changed their behaviour, found other ways of getting around. The expected gridlock just did not happen. Just as new roads generate extra traffic so it seems taking road space away can make traffic 'evaporate'. Seoul is planning to shrink road space in other parts of the city. Lessons for Aberdeen? Maybe the run up to Union Street pedestrianisation should have been accompanied by beefing up bus services, creating a safe cycle network and changing driver expectations

About ACF

Aberdeen Cycle Fourm (ACF) aim to encourage cycling of all types within Aberdeen, including; The promotion of cycling as part of a sustainable transport strategy for Aberdeen and to encourage the city council and other relevant agencies do the same. Campaigning for a safer cycling environment and improved cycle facilities in Aberdeen. Anyone who shares these aims is welcome to join in.

ACF Needs You

If you have views on issues like this, then why not get involved, It's free and you can give as little or as much as you want. Not sure what's involved, then why not drop in to one of our monthly meetings - Last Tuesday of the month 19:30hrs in the Townhouse and say hello

The SMALL Print

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