



BULLETIN - Spring 2008, Issue 4

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

Welcome...

Welcome to the first Aberdeen Cycle Forum newsletter of 2008. As you will see, the Forum has been continuing its mission to improve cycle facilities and the safety of cyclists in Aberdeen. The Forum acts as a 'consultative body' so has the opportunity to comment on or object to changes in the road infrastructure, before they take place.

WEB-LINX

We can't fit everything in the newsletter, some web addresses are long and fiddly to type, so our 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

PINCH POINTS

"Central islands" that narrow the running width of the road to 3-4 meters present a difficulty to cyclists, as motorists will frequently try to squeeze through, resulting in the cyclists becoming "pinched". At best, this is a disconcerting experience, at worst it's an accident - and there are examples of such accidents within the City.

Other councils, for example Edinburgh City Council, do not use such islands by default, remember Edinburgh is the council that publishes its own cycle design guidelines.

It is ironic that the budget for these islands is usually allocated under the 'Cycling, Walking & Safer Streets' programme financed from Holyrood, since such streets can often be strategic routes for cycling commuters. ACF believes that zebra crossings and signal controlled crossings should be used much more often as these are better for pedestrians and cyclists.

Within Aberdeen City central islands are not only installed for crossing the road but also for calming the traffic. Over the last two years ACF has been campaigning against these islands because of the dangers they present to cyclists, but to no avail. Therefore, when a new batch was proposed in August last year, ACF formally objected and spoke at three council meetings thereby deferring the decision to install them until a city-wide policy was developed.

ACF then conducted a survey of you our members, to get your views, you can read the results; WEB-LINX:20. While we recognise the decision to install an island or any other form of crossing is not a simple process, cyclists do not appear to be considered as a factor in the decision making process.



On 30th October, the Council's Policy and Strategy Committee met to consider 3 options:

- (1) do nothing
- (2) install 1.5m cycle lanes and
- (3) do not put in islands where the overall road width is less than 4m.

ACF were allowed to present our view to the committee and as a result they decided accept option 2 and change the council policy so that all central islands will have a coloured cycle lane of at least 1.5m throughout their length. This policy will also apply to the islands already in existence throughout the city. While we still

feel that there is not enough consideration given to using other forms of pedestrian crossing, the mandatory introduction of cycle lanes is a very positive move. For the first time Aberdeen City Council has changed its policy in favour of cyclists.

Generally, cycling accidents are under reported. If you are unfortunate enough to be the victim of an 'incident' at one of these pinch points please report it to the police, even if you are not seriously hurt, as there is currently no accident record for the council statistics at these locations. When the Forum last spoke with Grampian Police Road Safety Officers we were assured that we should make the effort to report accidents in general and such incidents would be recorded and followed-up.

DESERTED ISLAND DISCORD

As you can see from the article above, the Forum has been active on the matter of central traffic islands, but we need to address the issue from several directions.

Beginner's guide to coping with traffic islands

Comments and suggestions are welcome from readers and particularly if anyone has a copy of John Forrester's or Richard Ballantyne's guides to 'Effective Cycling' and knows of some relevant "do's & dont's" in these.

Anyway, here goes.....

- First of all, if you don't ride with a mirror, seriously consider getting one. This frees you from the necessity of having to turn your head around when approaching an island to see what's developing behind and enables you to do this more frequently and quickly. Anticipation, adopting and maintaining a consistent line are important for safety in many circumstances and a mirror assists this. Mirrors can be mounted on handlebar-ends, brake hoods, or the head tube and most bike outlets stock one or other varieties, if not all.
- After checking in the mirror, you should also make a last physical look-behind: making eye-contact is a powerful behavioural weapon in your armoury. This is particularly necessary if you don't have a mirror and is called 'your life saver' in the Police 'Cycling Proficiency Training Manual' for schools.
- If it is safe to do so, signal and move out to

a distance from the kerb which is half way between it and the island. This may take you outside any cycle lane which goes through it, but they are only advisory and don't seem to deter some drivers from attempting the close-to-homicidal overtake.

- When you are clear of the island, resume your usual distance from the kerb.
- If you know that someone behind has had to slow to let you through alone, give them a little wave of acknowledgement. It's a shared planet and we all have to try and exist in harmony, even though some of the juggernauts (private and commercial) that one encounters on the road, don't seem much in 'bon-accord' with that aspiration.

SIGNS on the DEESIDE RAILWAY LINE

An intervention by ACF has resulted in changes to new signs planned for the Deeside Line. Originally planned as "Cyclists slow down when



overtaking" the new text and sign can be seen here. The fact that the original wording was ever considered shows there is, at the very least, a perceived issue with cyclists on the shared use path. So please heed the words of cycle friendly

Aberdeen on the last page!

CYCLISTS LEFT STANDING

Some 2 years after purchasing them, the City Council have still to install more cycle stands in the City centre. The delay is apparently due to a lack of "staff resource".

This story recently featured in the Press & Journal (WEB-LINX:24) A council Spokesman said: "New cycle stands are being installed as part of a continuing program at locations across Aberdeen and there are more than 40 in place in the city centre alone".

ACF says "This is less than 10% of Glasgow's 400 and less than 5% of Manchester's 800+!"

ALL THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW...

Cyclists on Market Street can't help but ask the question - why does the red tarmac in the cycle lanes disappear at junctions? Keen to know the answer ACF consulted with Tom Rogers ACC's roads engineer who designed the road.

The answer is the colour does not actually "disappear" at all... Scottish Executive guidelines suggest the tarmac changes colour at junctions to highlight to motorists that cyclists are crossing. So, on Market Street it changes from Red to Light Grey (look closely, avoiding the traffic, of course, and you will see this is the case). So what about the other colours?

Apparently, within the City, red is "reserved" for mandatory no vehicle access, green for bus lanes, blue for disabled parking (neither is currently used), but purple tarmac might be available... Yes, the people who design our road layout really do think this way!

A FEW DAYS IN EXETER

An invitation to visit Exeter, one of England's new Cycle Demonstration Towns (CDT's), was an opportunity too good to miss, the 10quid plane fare to get there (although not very environmentally friendly) made it possible.

The first thing you see in the streets of Exeter are the number of cycle lanes, quality lanes of a width seldom seen in Aberdeen, both on and off road, interestingly many covered in Green tarmac (better hope no Aberdonian bus drivers move to Exeter). Unlike Aberdeen where lanes just come and go, a lot of thought has been put into developing a network of quality cycle routes to schools. To ensure the lanes are used the council has a full time cycle training officer, regular courses are run from school kids through to adults and a project officer works with all local schools, and many local businesses, to develop travel plans.

It goes to show what is possible where there is a political will in the council. So what's different between Exeter and Aberdeen? Exeter's spending on cycling is currently £1m per year as part of a three year program, Spokes estimate the total spend in Aberdeen is nearer £70,000 (WEB-LINX:27). The numbers speak for themselves.

Learn More at the Cycle Exeter Website (WEB-LINX:25).

GRAMPIAN POLICE ARE USING BIKES! (but not in Aberdeen)

While there are apparently still no Aberdeen police or PCSOs using bikes to get round their beats, elsewhere in the Grampian Police region the value and popularity of policing with cycles has been noticed.

In September 2007, Community beat officers in Keith and Fochabers (Grampian Moray Division) received 2 locally sponsored cycle patrol starter packs for urban and rural beat work. The bikes included with the kits are Specialized Hardrocks (with disc brakes).

The Cycle Forum would like to see Aberdeen based police on bikes as soon as possible as well.

Coming Up Soon

RE-CYCLING!

Got an old bike or two sitting around in the garage? Don't send it to the landfill just yet. A bicycle recycling project is currently in the works for Aberdeen. Project partners Aberdeen Foyer and Instant Neighbour are still in the planning and fund-raising stages, but hope to have the initiative up and running by Spring 2008. The project will fix up donated bicycles to be given or sold to members of the community, provide training in bicycle maintenance and safety and provide a workshop facility for interested persons to build or refurbish their own ride.

Ken Milroy, Chief Executive of Aberdeen Foyer and Sophy Copland, Chief Executive of Instant Neighbour, said that the project's goals are wide-ranging:

'The project offers clear benefits in terms of reducing waste, health and fitness and encouraging more use of cycling as a sustainable means of transport. Additionally, we are keen to develop the initiative as a Social Enterprise offering important training and employment opportunities to those who use the services of Aberdeen Foyer and Instant Neighbour'.

Currently, the project partners are consulting similar programs in Edinburgh and Glasgow and are open to input from the community. Soon, however, they'll be looking for bikes. Check this space later in 2008 for more details.

BONNIE DUNDEE

One of our members took their bike to Dundee on the train recently for a look round.

"They have the 27 mile Green Circular cycle route which links up all the parks and sights around the city. There's an east section and a west section. It's easy to do one or the other: they both dumbbell out from the centre. I followed the west section. It was very well signposted, nearly all on cycle path or shared footpath. There were plenty of cyclists on parts of it."

A map of the green Route can be found at (WEB-LINX:26)



Cycle/Footpath across the Tay Bridge

Don't forget in Dundee you can also cycle across the 1.4 mile Tay Road Bridge. A bike-sized lift takes you to carriageway

level on the Dundee side. The bike lane is a wide fenced off lane on the "central reservation". If it seems hard going across: it's because you're going uphill the whole way: the south side of the bridge is much higher than the north side. Once over, you have a stunning view of Dundee, and you can continue on National Cycle Route traffic-free routes to



Tay Bridge, Ariel View

the forest at the Tay estuary, where you join a long distance footpath towards St Andrews.

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.

And Finally...

Cycle Friendly Aberdeen

The Forum is actively trying to encourage the City of Aberdeen to be as 'cycle friendly' as possible. Personally, I would like to see cyclists being friendly to one another in the City! We are all in the same boat and face the same road hazards together. It is really very simple, and has valid reasoning: when passing a slower moving bicycle, your presence is sometimes a surprise as you can't be heard approaching. It makes sense to say 'Hello' or 'Good Morning/Afternoon' as you pass. It is good practice to speak to pedestrians on dual use path regardless of which direction they are travelling. Why not extend this courtesy to other cyclists? It may not always be possible but when you can, please acknowledge other cyclists: a wave will do, or even just a nod and a smile!

About ACF

Aberdeen Cycle Forum (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 and say hello - Usually the last Tuesday of the month 19:30hrs in the Townhouse, check the website.

The SMALL Print

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