

About us

Aberdeen Cycle Forum (ACF) is a campaigning and advocacy organisation formed in 2003 and which represents the interests of cyclists throughout the city. Our membership is approximately 500. We are entirely a voluntary organisation.

Meetings are held monthly and between those office-bearers and other core members spend a significant amount of time and effort in lobbying to improve facilities for cyclists in Aberdeen. Further information about us and minutes of our meetings can be found at

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

What are the barriers to cycling in Aberdeen?

A survey carried out in 2015 found that the main reason why people choose not to cycle in Aberdeen is that they do not feel safe. 79% of non-cyclists surveyed thought cycling was “too dangerous”. This is largely down to traffic and the lack of high-quality cycle infrastructure such as segregated cycle routes. Cycling in busy, fast moving traffic on roads with advisory cycle lanes and through junctions (such as roundabouts) which have been designed to maximise the flow and speed of traffic is never going to appeal to a novice cyclist, and so modal shift is unlikely to occur without significantly more funding and – perhaps even more importantly - a complete re-think of priorities. Other barriers such as weather and lack of secure cycle parking were also found to be issues but less significant than safety. A summary of the survey can be found at

http://www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/?page_id=19

Is cycling properly funded?

At present around 2% of transport funding is spent on cycling. This is clearly inadequate to provide high-quality infrastructure which will appeal to a high number of potential cyclists. There will be no step-change without a significant increase in this spend.

Are Councils and/or other key bodies properly engaged?

ACF spends the majority of its time and effort in communication with Councillors and officials of Aberdeen City Council (ACC). Over the years, we have found that whilst the Council may appear to commit to support cycling by way of various plans and strategies, the reality is far different. Officials in both planning and transport have been very backward in giving any kind of priority to cycling. One example of this would be the Westhill Cycle Path alongside the A944. Despite years of lobbying by ACF and going through a Petitions Committee, the route is unchanged and despite being used daily by a high-number of cyclists it is sub-standard and in places dangerous. ACF’s view of this unsatisfactory saga and an example of what we find ourselves up against can be read at:

<http://www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/?p=1268>

Is current infrastructure adequate?

No. Although Aberdeen has a reasonable number of advisory cycle lanes (i.e. an on-road lane with a white line painted to provide demarcation) these are generally poor quality. They are intermittent and in many places there are no parking restrictions so vehicles are permitted to park and so block the lane. In most cases, the lane disappears at junctions where it would be expected that cyclists most need protection. In some places, even as recently as last year, new lanes were being created which were below the minimum width stipulated in 'Cycling by Design'. Our view is rapidly becoming that advisory cycle lanes simply do not work.

In the (very) few places where segregated routes do exist, lack of maintenance is an issue. This relates both to winter use (gritting) and general lack of any attention in the form of sweeping, clearing leaves or broken glass for example.

Is current funding being well spent?

In 2016 ACC created a new crossing over the River Don. ACF had been consulted several times over a period of years over the design and creation of a segregated bike path to run alongside traffic lanes on the bridge and connecting roads. Ultimately our input was ignored. ACC claim that the cycle lane cost up to £4m? and yet our assessment is that the end result is poor and does not meet design standards. A critique of the route can be read at:

http://www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/news/Nov2016_Tillydrone-Avenue.pdf

ACC have also recently spent a significant sum to upgrade a path alongside the A96 Ellon Rd. Although the route is welcome and may be of benefit to serve future housing development, we do not believe it is currently a sufficiently well-used route to have justified the level of expenditure. In our view the reason that this project was taken forward in preference to others is that there was ample space to create a route without having to re-allocate road space. Thus investment has been directed to somewhere that it was 'easy' to spend, rather than where it would have had maximum benefit.

Over the years, ACF has regularly been asked by ACC to submit lists of small-scale improvements suitable for use of CWSS (Cycling, Walking Safer Streets) funding. We have done so and although some have been implemented, for example leading to an increase in city centre cycle parking provision, others are ignored or delayed by years before being implemented. In 2015 or 2016 we complained to ACC after CWSS funds were used to improve parking for HGVs in Dyce, the justification given being that it would improve pedestrian safety.

Is enforcement an issue?

In our view the lack of adequate policing of traffic in Aberdeen is also an issue which undermines cyclist' confidence and so deters people from taking-up cycling. So far as we are aware there is little or no policing of 20mph speed limits in the city centre, and none of vehicle infringements into advanced-stop boxes at junctions (a survey by ACF found that advanced stop boxes are infringed around 40% of the time, which may be seen as a systemic disregard for them and hence for the safety of cyclists). Use of hand-held mobile phones, speeding, jumping red lights are all common place and evident to any casual observer. All of these simply exacerbate the lack of safety which cyclists feel. Our previous periodic meetings with Police have ceased as they are regularly unavailable due to of a lack of resources. Anecdotally, our members tell us that policing is inconsistent and poor locally compared with other parts of Scotland. If Scottish Government has ambitious targets for increases in active travel, why is this not reflected in policing priorities?

Is cycling being promoted to young people and /or learners?

ACF routinely receives training enquiries from both novice and 'returning' cyclists. We do not have the resources to provide this, but several of our members previously volunteered to assist the Council with provision of the cycle training before the program was given over to Adventure Aberdeen. Regardless of who was providing this Bikeability training in schools, some head teachers would not allow some or all of the program to be taught, citing safety concerns. Normalising cycling from an early age as a transport option and not just a leisure activity is key for keeping people on their bikes. Cycle education in schools must be made a higher priority and be better integrated into the curriculum

Are we making progress?

Finally, we would refer you back to our more detailed evidence to the Scottish Parliament in 2009. It is disappointing that reading over it again more than 7 years later, almost nothing has changed.

http://www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/consultations/20091107_active_travel.pdf