

Labour Transport Convener's thoughts on Cycling in Edinburgh

✘ by Councillor Lesley Hinds, Labour spokesperson on Transport and Labour candidate for Inverleith Ward.

Cycling in Edinburgh is increasingly popular, as a recreation and as a way of getting to work or just getting around the city. That's a good thing – but there have also been two tragic fatal accidents involving cyclists in our city recently. That means, as cycling quite rightly gets more popular, we all need to pay more attention to making cycling safer.

A 'summit' meeting has been held between the Council and The Scottish Government to look at safety issues for cyclists in the city. More will need to be done to educate all road users, including cyclists, to be considerate and observe traffic rules and regulations. And more money will need to be spent too.

In the Council there is all-party support for the [Active Travel Action Plan](#) and the [Edinburgh Road Safety Plan](#). To support those plans, the [Council agreed recently](#) to increase its spending on cycling from 1 April this year to 5% of the total transport budget. That's £957,000 in capital and £478,000 in revenue spending. This last year the Council spent about £600,000 capital money on cycling and only about 1% of the transport revenue budget. So that's a big increase.

However, there's not the certainty that there ought to be in the Council about how that extra money will be spent, and we have to wait until September to find out the detail. What is certain though is, after the elections in May, we'll need to find the strong political leadership to see that the cash

stays with cycling and is well spent.

I lead for Edinburgh Labour on transport matters and I believe the City needs to look at issues like increasing the separation between bikes and motor traffic in busy streets, the safe storage of bikes, a possible cycle hire scheme, 20mph speed restrictions in residential areas and school cycle training so that cycling and walking become a natural and healthy way of getting around Edinburgh. The target for Edinburgh is that by 2020 15% of all travel should be by bike.

Unfortunately, SNP ministers in the Scottish Government took some persuading to allocate enough money even to fulfil their own plans about 'active travel'. When John Swinney, the Scottish Government Finance Minister originally published his draft budget in September 2011, he proposed a cut of £9.1 million (36%) (£25.1m in 2011-12 to £16m in 2012-13).

Because of the outcry and fantastic lobbying from members of Sustrans, Spokes and other cycling organisations, supported by local MSPs Sarah Boyack, Malcolm Chisholm and Kezia Dugdale, the final budget showed only a cut of £5.1m (£25.1m in 2011-12 to £20m in 2012-13). Still a cut of 20% though. The organization that has helped build Edinburgh's cycle paths is Sustrans and they've done magnificent work throughout the country supporting sustainable travel. At first SNP ministers said in their draft budget they would stop funding Sustrans altogether; but again, after strong public and political lobbying, Scottish ministers agreed actually to increase the Sustrans budget this coming year.

If you have an interest in cycling in Edinburgh, come to the hustling meeting organised by [SPOKES on Thursday 29th March 2012](#) at 7.30pm Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge