Cycling is on the political agenda in Edinburgh

More news about the ways that cycling is being highlighted and discussed in Edinburgh.

 Lib Dem candidate, [John Knox](), standing for election in the Liberton/Gilmerton Ward, is highlighting the fact that the Liberal Democrats want to make Edinburgh the green transport capital of the UK, and that they plan to improve on the 25% increase in cycling which he claims there has been in the city over the last two years.

John will attempt to cycle along every street in what he hopes will become his ward between sunrise and sunset on Friday 27 April 2012. There are 367 streets in the Liberton/Gilmerton ward in south Edinburgh, making his Common Riding between 50 and 60 miles long. He will measure the exact distance on a cycle computer as he goes along, and hopefully his election poster-ed bicycle will be seen by as many voters as possible.

The increase in spending will help to develop a 'Family Network' of safe, signed, cycle routes across the city along with other improvements for cyclists.

The Lib Dem led council has also passed a leasing scheme, endorsed by cycling campaigners SPOKES, that offers the public the chance to use cycling as a mode of transport, without having to buy a bike. Up to 200 new and refurbished cycles are now available for hire.

John said:-"Hopefully, my journey round the ward will also highlight the usefulness of cycling in the city. It comes a day before the big cycling rally at the Scottish Parliament, Pedal on Parliament, which will call for cycling to be made as much a normal part of life, as it is in countries like Denmark

and the Netherlands. The Liberal Democrats in Edinburgh have pledged to earmark 5 per cent of the Council's transport budget for cycling, cycle lanes, routes and such like.

"I've lived in this ward for the last nine years and have canvassed in over 90 streets," says John. " But I want to visit every street and with just a few days to go till the election, I thought the best way of making sure I know every nook and cranny of this ward, was to cycle it mile for mile.

"Edinburgh has become a more cycle-friendly city since 2007 and we must ensure that we do not relent on our ambition to make this city greener and safer".

"Finally, the Common Riding is designed to engage people in this local election campaign. Councils, after all, actually deliver most public services, schools, care for the elderly, fire, police, dustbin collection, roads, parks, libraries and sports facilities. In my view local Councils should have more powers and responsibilities. Too much is being centralised, which is perhaps why people have become disengaged from local politics."

Cycling has featured high on the council agenda this year. In the recently issued Leader's Report, Councillor Jenny Dawe said:-

"Research shows that 7.3 per cent of adults in Edinburgh cycle to work — by far the highest in Scotland, and the Council is working to further increase this. Edinburgh is one of six European "Cycling Hero" cities in the Cycling Heroes Advancing sustainable Mobility Practice (CHAMP) project. The project has brought £70,000 to help Edinburgh promote cycling further.

Recently work has begun on two major cycling projects. The Quality Bike Corridor will provide enhanced cycling infrastructure between the University of Edinburgh's King's Buildings and George IV Bridge and the Leith to Portobello

project will transform travel by bike between the two places.

Cycling in Edinburgh has become safer, with the risk of an accident per journey reduced by around 75 per cent since 1991. However, sadly, there have been two fatalities this year; and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure convened a meeting recently to discuss how to improve safety for cyclists in Scotland. This was attended by the Head of Transport, Marshall Poulton, and policy makers and campaign groups discussed measures such as 20mph areas and on and off road provision for cyclists."

The council decided to fund a cycle leasing scheme to help promote cycling in the capital at their recent meeting on 15 March 2012. The motion proposed by Transport Convenor, Gordon Mackenzie, was passed by majority of 52 votes to 3, proving perhaps that the matter is universally promoted by all councillors no matter what their political persuasion.

The wording of the motion was as follows:-

> 10. *Bike Lease Scheme and Promotion of Cycling – Motion by Councillor Gordon MackenzieThe following motion by Councillor Gordon Mackenzie was submitted in terms of Standing Order 28:"Council notes the success of other cities in increasing cycle use through targeted cycling promotion activities. Council therefore instructs the Head of Transport to:*

> 1. (a) *pilot a bike lease scheme similar to the model proposed by the Bike Station as part of their recent People's Lottery bid, initially with 200 bikes, and with the flexibility to increase the size in future; and*
> 2. (b) *prepare proposals which will deliver targeted cycling promotion activities and promote better*

> *cycling.*

> *Council further agrees that the Head of Transport seeks third party support, including the potential for commercial sponsorship, for the cycle leasing scheme and targeted promotion activities and reports to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee later this year."*

This means that we will have a cycle leasing scheme in Edinburgh, which is not quite the same as the Cycle hire scheme in London or Paris, but is intended for people who otherwise cannot afford to buy a bike of their own, and who might want to use one for a period of time. The Edinburgh Reporter has used bike hire schemes in London, Paris, Dublin and Washington, and these are all very user-friendly ways of getting about the city as a tourist or resident.

The streets in these cities are then populated by more cyclists immediately owing to the constant availability of bikes on many street corners. A larger 'core' of city cyclists is one of the ways that some campaigners think that cycling safety would be improved more quickly, as highlighted [at the recent debate on cycling in Holyrood.](#)