

Talking about cycling with the Transport Convenor



Councillor Mackenzie speaking to cyclists at the Edinburgh Bike Breakfast June 2011

Cycling is becoming more popular as a means of transport, and as a way of keeping fit. Cycling on our city streets has been discussed at both council and government level over the last few months.

Gordon Mackenzie is currently Transport Convenor for The City of Edinburgh Council, who recently agreed to spend a minimum of 5% of the [Transport budget](#) on cycling, and separately agreed that £9m would be invested in cycling, walking and safer streets.

The Edinburgh Reporter talked to him about the ways that the council might improve the city cycling experience. Mackenzie is himself a cyclist. He said:-" I use my bike mainly as a means of transport. I don't use it as a means of exercise alone. My children keep me fit, and they're pretty good fun (when they're behaving!) I particularly like to use the off-road network in North Edinburgh, either the old railway lines or the path along the Water of Leith."

And how will cycling be improved in the city if he is in charge of the Transport portfolio in the next council administration? He offered up the relevant parts of the LibDem Manifesto with his own comments on each point by way of explanation.

Manifesto:- "Building on our investment in cycling, the highest in Scotland, and our road safety measures such as mobile speed signs and 20mph zones, increase the percentage

of transport spend allocated to cycling to a minimum of 5% in 2012/13 and increase by 1% annually.”

Mackenzie:- “This commitment backs up the funding we provided in this year’s Council budget. In summary a significant proportion of the funding will be used to accelerate the completion of the [Active Travel Action Plan](#) cycling components, increase the funding for promoting cycling, properly maintaining the cycle network, bringing in a cycle leasing scheme and providing cycle training for P6 children.”

Manifesto:- Use Edinburgh’s Streets Ahead Partnership as a starting point for a ‘Streets Ahead Plus’ scheme that will use trained local volunteers to identify potential road safety problems (speeding, hazardous parking at schools, misuse of cycling and pedestrian areas) to be addressed by targeting those responsible and raising awareness.

✘ Mackenzie: – “‘Streets Ahead Plus’ is based on the award winning Community Speedwatch schemes already operating across many parts of the UK. Feedback on the introduction of the 20mph pilot in south Edinburgh and the awareness campaign on Advanced Stop Boxes has been generally positive. However many people have commented that they would like to see more action to reinforce these measures including enforcement. Streets Ahead Plus will support the implementation of these and other road safety measures. Local volunteers would be trained and equipped to identify and record specific road safety problems; speeding, stopping in Advanced Stop Boxes, jumping red lights etc.

Details of the offence; registration number, location, time, etc, would be passed on to the [Streets Ahead Partnership](#) to follow up as appropriate e.g. via a warning letter or home visit. The purpose and benefit of the scheme would include, mobilising community support for road safety and providing a more visible presence on the street, thereby deterring the offending behaviour. Additionally, identifying the offenders

will assist the [Streets Ahead Partnership](#) to target those individuals for awareness raising and /or enforcement action. The Fife pilot has shown that speeds dropped as a result of this approach, it has been hailed as a success by the Police and is now being extended to other areas of Fife.”

Manifesto :- Accelerate the Active Travel Action Plan, improve the maintenance of the existing cycle network, target safety issues and reaffirm our commitment to the goals set out in the Charter of Brussels.

Mackenzie:- “Details of the sort of projects which are being planned are provided in the appendix to the manifesto. It’s not the complete list but will hopefully give your readers some indication of projects which are proposed for their area or routes they use.”

Manifesto:- ‘Roll out cycle training to all P6 children in Edinburgh’s schools’

Mackenzie:-“The additional funding being provided as part of the Cycling budget will enable us to fund paid trainers where necessary. If The Scottish Government contributes to the initiative Council funds will be freed up for use in other cycling projects.”

Manifesto:- ‘Work with NHS, education, voluntary and private sectors to promote cycling to work or study’

Mackenzie:- “Funding of c£100,000 a year, from the Council budget, has been earmarked for this initiative along with whatever contributions are available from external funders and sponsors. A proposal has already been agreed by Council, and we expect the project to go out to tender towards the end of the summer.”

Manifesto:-‘Introduce more 20mph limits where there is support from local residents’

Mackenzie:-“We believe that there is considerable potential to replicate the current pilot in other parts of the city and will also explore the inclusion of busier roads and local shopping areas as has already happened on part of Causewayside.”

Manifesto:- ‘To trial bikes on Trams within 6 months of operational service’

Mackenzie:- “We believe there is little risk in bring the trial period forward by 6 months.”

Manifesto:- ‘To strengthen the “Edinburgh Road Works Ahead” agreement to reduce the disruption caused by roadworks. We will invest in better traffic modelling, better signage and better warning to road and footway users; press the Roads Commissioner to improve the way utilities works are managed and inspected; and lobby the Scottish Government to introduce “lane charges” to compensate for disruption and to encourage speedier completions.

Mackenzie:- “As well as causing disruption to journeys, roadworks can often present a particular hazard for cyclists with narrow lanes and drivers confused by unfamiliar diversions. Getting roadworks completed more quickly, with better planning and signage will reduce the disruption and the likelihood of accidents.”

Manifesto:- Deliver on the Jan Gehl recommendations for the city centre, creating new welcoming spaces for residents and visitors; and report on potential temporary traffic schemes by the end of 2012 with a report on permanent schemes by the middle of 2015.

Mackenzie :- “This will provide the opportunity to investigate the feasibility and desirability of an east -west cycle route through the city centre on a trial basis before implementing the preferred schemes in the second half of the Council.”

Manifesto:- Recognising the importance of building on our progress in maintaining good condition roads and pavements for all users, commit to reducing the percentage of roads and pavements in need of repair over the next five years.

Manifesto – Aware of the inherited backlog of repairs from the previous administration and of the damage wrought by two extreme winters, use the extra £3m in the 2012-13 budget to fix over a third of the city’s potholes with our award-winning “Right First Time” scheme, using materials and processes to make more permanent repairs. Over the next four years, we will invest additional funds to ensure that all potholes are fixed permanently wherever possible.

Mackenzie:- “Better road surfaces are a benefit to all road users but perhaps more to cyclists who are at greater risk if a pothole causes a fall or or sudden change of direction.”

Manifesto – Unless there is compelling evidence that voluntary actions will deliver the traffic air pollution reductions required to improve air quality in the next three years, to promote Low Emission Zone(s) and target the highest polluting older buses and lorries.

Mackenzie :- “Pollution affects everyone living in or using the busier streets in Edinburgh and cyclists are no exception. Improving air quality will make cycling an even healthier way to travel around Edinburgh.

[Our previous article about the launch of the LibDem manifesto](#) has a copy of the manifesto in full.