

# Who is cycling in Edinburgh?



*More talk about cycling...*

[Pedal on Parliament](#) will take place this weekend when a flash cycle will highlight the need for measures to allow safer cycling on our streets. Cycling is now being talked about by most politicians. Council hopeful [John Knox is trying to cycle](#) all the streets in Liberton/Gilmerton Ward today on a bike bedecked by election posters. If you see him send us a photo! Our photo today shows the January [protest outside St Andrew's House](#) when the message was delivered to Transport Minister, Keith Brown, that he needed to do more for cyclists and others wanting to travel 'actively'.

The Edinburgh Reporter is a cyclist, both weekday and weekends, both in an effort to get around more easily, more cheaply and of course with a view to keeping fit, and so this is a topic close to our hearts.

There are certainly still some black spots on our city's streets where potholes can prove to be dangerous obstacles, and other road users, cyclists and those driving four wheeled vehicles, are not always polite, or forgiving of the slower road user on two wheels. But the benefits of getting around while enjoying some fresh air and exercise largely outweigh these factors, and we love using the cycle paths to get around town.

We talked to some weel-kent Edinburgh residents about their own cycling experiences in the city:-

✘ [Andrew Burns](#), the Labour Group leader on the City of Edinburgh Council, explained how he uses his bike:-

"I've been a keen cycle-tourer for all of my adult life, and

have undertaken numerous routes over the last 30 years. I've completed three John O'Groats to Lands End tours; one Los Angeles to New York tour and even an extensive tour inside China, from Chengdu to Hong Kong! More locally, this September will be my 10th consecutive year of completing (hopefully!) the annual Glasgow-Edinburgh 'Pedal for Scotland' event.

I do enjoy cycling! And, here in Edinburgh, I use my bike to cycle to work every morning, Monday through to Friday, a round trip of about 4 miles. I do also, occasionally, use the bike at weekends to get from my flat to our allotment, a round trip of about 3 miles.

My favourite place to cycle in the Capital has to be the section of the canal I use every morning, from Harrison Park along to the Leamington Lift Bridge. It has the most marvellous mix of ancient and modern, near-rural and urban, busy and tranquil all within a mere mile-long stretch. I never tire of that section of my daily journey, and on my return-leg there are even now 'canal tow-path, solar-lights' to help guide me when it's dark!

As for cycling in Edinburgh generally, I'm very proud of the progress that's been made, specifically across the last two periods of different Council Administrations, and really do think the city is now close to a 'tipping-point'. If Edinburgh Labour are in administration after the election on 3rd May, we'll be certain to build on the good work of the last 9 years to make sure that more and more people make a positive choice to cycle on a daily basis. The all-round benefits are huge, in so many ways."

✘ Mark Lazarowicz, MP for Edinburgh North and Leith, said:-"I use my bike quite a lot in Edinburgh, although not so much in the winter or if the weather's bad, I have to admit! I'm fortunate that North Edinburgh and Leith has a good network of cycle routes, and often cycling is the quickest way between meetings.

I have my own bike in London which I use occasionally.

I know there are a lot of cyclists in my constituency – indeed, I had an email on a cycling issue from a constituent a few minutes before speaking to you! She was asking about cycling generally but did specifically mention the need for better North-South routes across the city. She has a good point there – places like Picardy Place are particularly dangerous for cyclists, and indeed all traffic.”

Journalist [Rob Edwards](#) is the Environment Editor for The Herald. He is also someone who is regularly seen using his bike around the city, when he is not pinned to his seat writing.

Rob said:-“Primarily, I use my bike as a means of transport, though it also helps keep me fit, and can be fun if the weather’s nice. Often, it’s simply the quickest, cheapest and most efficient way to get from A to B in Edinburgh. My favourite place to cycle in Edinburgh is through the Meadows when the cherry blossom is out and the sun is shining, or round Holyrood Park when there’s no wind.

I think that the way that things can be improved for cyclists is to offer more devoted cycleways, which could be better thought out and more clearly marked. There could be more opportunities to share paths with pedestrians, rather than risking life and limb with cars, buses and taxis. And I would like to see some measures to make drivers and fellow cyclists take more care. Oh, and fewer potholes!”

David Miller, [Environment Correspondent for the BBC](#), is an avid cyclist mainly for commuting purposes, having invested in a new folding bike only last year to make his journey to the BBC offices in either Edinburgh or Glasgow both easier and quicker.

David said:-“My bike has advantages and disadvantages, but mainly I use it to get to Haymarket, then I fold it up and get onto the train, if I am going to Glasgow. My regular route goes through Inverleith Park which is lovely. That is the best bit of my day! There I am cycling with the allotments on one

side and the Castle on the other, and people out exercising their dogs in the park.

“If I am staying in Edinburgh then part of my route includes the city centre, and the cycle lane at the Rodney Street junction is a very difficult one to negotiate. The bike lane often has parked cars in it, and you have to judge it so that you get into the bike box before the traffic moves off, but it is not easy as it’s uphill there! So my route through the city centre in Edinburgh is not the easiest one.

“In the recent cycling debate in Parliament someone commented that cyclists need to know that they are protected by more than just a line of paint, and I think that is a useful phrase. Sometimes the bike lane is not the best or safest place to be, especially if there are cars parked there, and it would be good to be a bit better separated as road users. It is sometimes easier at busy places like the Picardy Place roundabout to wimp out and cross as a pedestrian. You have to be really confident if you are cycling on the road there.

“I also have a brilliant bike ride from Queen Street Station to Pacific Quay in Glasgow along the Broomielaw. At peak times I can cycle up the bike path to Haymarket and then take the train to Glasgow and have a lovely cycle along the river, which is better and quicker than taking a car.”

✘ Lothians MSP, Alison Johnstone, is an avid cyclist too. She said:-“I use my bike for both commuting (not daily, I’m a bus and walking fan too!) and for fun. My favourite cycle way is alongside the Water of Leith.

“My regular route into town is along the Canal, then on to the Meadows, a popular route for many cyclists. Links between the canal and Gilmore Place could be improved. The cycle lane in Gilmore Place is meaningless as it’s largely covered by parked cars, particularly as it nears the busy King’s Theatre junction. This is a problem for most cycle lanes in the city.”

What do you think? Are you a cyclist? Give us your views!

Photo by Colin Hattersley

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