

# Councillor Jim Orr's Dutch Blog – Day 3

✘ Councillor Jim Orr is the Vice Convenor of Transport and Environment. He is currently on a trip to Holland to find out how they deal with road design, particularly in relation to cyclists.

The council [has promised](#) to spend 5% of its transport budget on provision for cyclists, and since Councillor Orr is a cyclist himself this is an area close to his own heart. He has been using his council iPad to write these articles for us at the end of each busy day.

On Tuesday morning we went to Amersfoort to see the station cycle hub and meet Abellio reps.

Abellio run the OV Fiets cycle hire scheme across the Dutch rail network (almost all stations have bike hire schemes like the blue and yellow ones we had in Houten earlier in the week).

Here, 42% of rail users access the station by bike compared to 2% in the UK meaning that there is a lot of potential. They also run the OV chip card which works a lot like the London Oyster card. Due to the massive numbers of bikes in the Netherlands, taking them on the train is often a challenge and so it is more economical to encourage station storage which is itself a big challenge. The station bikes cost around 3.5 euros per day to rent. Guarded and unguarded storage is also available, the latter for a fee.



Keith Brown MSP Minister  
for Transport

In the UK Abellio-run Merseyrail will soon have secure cycle

storage and cycle hire across their network. The cycle hub was great as expected and Transport Minister Keith Brown showed off his silky skills on a standard Dutch brake pedal rail bike. It was great that he took the time to join us for most of the day and all the Dutch were very impressed by this.



The afternoon was spent in The Hague where we watched a school cycling exam take place. Everything was really well organised (as usual) with local sport academy students and graduates running the tests. In the Netherlands "traffic" is a specific school subject. The programme is free to all schools and 125 of the 165 primary schools participate, which adds up to 4,500 kids per annum. Toby the Stork is the cycling exam mascot and he is also the mascot for the local football team. This type of initiative supports the Dutch cycle culture from the bottom up.



Lord Berkeley, Karen from Scottish Gov't, marianna our host and Cllr McAveety the Glasgow cycling Tsar. All in The Hague.

We then had lectures and a presentation on road safety which is of huge importance in the Netherlands. SWOV is the government agency. Statistically while fatality rates for cyclists are falling, serious injury rates are rising (as in Scotland apparently) although they are still low by our standards. Seniors are cycling more and more and this may be part of the reason, but other factors are possibly alcohol use, poor infrastructure and potholes. "Sustainable safety" is the approach to fixing this, for example by mixing vulnerable road users only at low speeds and otherwise keeping them separate. The Dutch have the same debates as us around the need for helmet wearing and the importance of lights, although they have enforcement issues around the latter. HGVs are increasingly having more mirrors fitted to address blind

spots, and some cities make HGVs park at the outskirts for goods to be transported to shops in smaller, safer vehicles.

There are plenty of effective measures to improve safety but implementation is a challenge as is education. All of this was interesting and very relevant to the same challenges at home.

After this we met with Dutch parliamentarians. One contribution I noted was that one member stressed that while 80% of spend is done by local authorities, that central government still has a vital responsibilities around:

*Spatial planning (like the town of Houten)*

*Railway facilities for cycle parking and car parking and space on trains*

*Safety legislation and specific extra funds for safety programmes*

*Taxi incentives such as VAT discounts and cycle to work scheme discounts*

*Education – for example of minority communities to pass on the cycling tradition*

*Legislation – such as presumed liability in the event of a cycling accident*

The chair of the infrastructure and environment committee, Mr Jansen, also stressed the importance of developing recreational cycle routes from towns to the countryside. As city centres are more complex and expensive, this can be a popular and effective measure (like the Gilmerton – Roslin link or the A90 path to South Queensferry).

To close the evening we had a networking event with Dutch experts and companies and this was a great group of people – all united around a love of the bike.

✘ I tried out a bough bike (made of oak – 1500 euros to buy, see photo) and it was great. It is clear that there is

still a Dutch bicycle industry such as [www.postbike.nl](http://www.postbike.nl).

Another fantastic day and a real privilege to be here.