

Lothians MSP criticises Scottish Ministers over transport statistics



Alison Johnstone, Green MSP for Lothian and co-convenor of Holyrood's cross-party group on cycling, says statistics released today show Scottish ministers' failure to make the right choices on transport.

The publication of the annual Scottish Household Survey shows the volume of traffic on Scotland's roads has risen to over 43 billion vehicle kilometres, against a drop across the UK, while rates of walking and cycling to work and school have remained worryingly low.

Cycling still only accounts for two per cent of journeys to work; the Scottish Government has a target of ten per cent of all journeys in just seven years' time.

The reasons people gave in the survey for not cycling to work were: too many cars (14 per cent), speed of traffic (12 per cent) and inconsiderate drivers (9 per cent).

The Scottish Government recently launched a half a million pounds marketing campaign called The Nice Way Code which has been widely criticised by cycling campaigners for enforcing stereotypes.

Alison Johnstone said: -"A rise in vehicle traffic and no rise in rates of walking and cycling. Can there be a clearer sign that Scottish ministers have utterly failed to make the right choices?

"Instead of shovelling billions towards dual carriageways,

bypasses and bridges, and frittering precious funds on ill-conceived adverts, the Scottish Government should be investing meaningful sums in dedicated cycle infrastructure, clearer junctions and safer streets. There is some small hope as Edinburgh pushes ahead with more 20mph zones; I'd urge other local authorities to do the same as it is clear we cannot expect any action from Scottish ministers."

At yesterday's Transport & Environment Committee meeting the City of Edinburgh Council agreed to consult on extending the pilot scheme tried out in Marchmont where the speed limit on certain roads was reduced to 20mph. This is in an effort to reduce not just speed but also encourage other forms of transport such as walking and cycling. The roads are made safer by reducing the speed of motor traffic and this encourages people to use more environmentally friendly means of transport. The surveys carried out during the pilot showed that the average speed only dropped by about 2 mph but this is enough to increase safety margins. Where traffic travels more quickly it is the opinion of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents that this "turns near misses into crashes".

The Transport Statistics which Ms Johnstone refers to are from Scottish Household Survey:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/documents/reports/j281378/j281378.pdf>