

Edinburgh Councillor Blogs – Councillor Jim Orr on the Edinburgh Cycling summit



By Councillor Jim Orr, Vice-Convenor of Transport and Environment and cycling spokesman.

On Tuesday of this week the first ever Scottish cycling summit was held at the City Chambers here in Edinburgh. The event was opened by Council Leader Andrew Burns who introduced the Transport Minister Keith Brown fresh from a commute from Inverkeithing by bike that morning. Mr Brown spoke of his commitment to cycling and active travel and we were delighted that he confirmed that the ambitious enhanced Leith Walk proposals would be funded with £3.6m from the extra £20m for cycling that was made available in the last Scottish Government budget. Outline designs from June are available via the following link [here](#) but detailed work is ongoing.

Key features of the design include:

- Cycle lanes from Foot of the Walk to Picardy Place. There will be significant sections of uninterrupted cycle space including sections of dedicated on and off road cycling. Cycling will be largely segregated from Pilrig Street uphill towards the Omni Centre.
- Improved pavements and junctions to benefit pedestrians and more frequent crossing points along Leith Walk.
- Redesigned, simplified junctions that are much easier and simpler for pedestrians to cross.
- Replacement of London Rd roundabout with a signalled junction to significantly enhance conditions for both pedestrians and cyclists.

- A simplified streetscape more conducive to community activity, trading and business.
- Improved connectivity for sustainable forms of travel between the waterfront and the city centre.

This £20m is the largest sum ever made available for cycling by The Scottish Government. The Minister also confirmed that there would be a significant investment in the A9 cycling facilities along with the dualling of that road. His trip to the Netherlands in June clearly made a big impression on him and he spoke admiringly of their policy of designing residential streets where the “car is the guest”. The delegate pack is produced for you below and it contains his foreword to the summit and the Executive Summary to the refreshed Cycling Action Plan for Scotland. Mr Brown also stressed the need for partnership working if Scotland is to get to the shared vision of 10% of everyday trips by bike.

According to the delegate list 22 Local Authorities (of 32) were scheduled to attend and John Lauder the Sustrans Director said it was the most high ranking gathering on cycling he had ever seen. His Twitter feed gives an interesting account of the Summit (@John_Lauder) (and his biography in the delegate pack which you can access below is quite amusing too!)

Cycle Summit: presentation by [@Edinburgh_CC](#) transport team on ATAP, 20mph, QbiC, training, partnerships, Leith Walk, city centre [#sustrans](#)

– John Lauder (@John_Lauder) [September 24, 2013](#)

Cycle Summit: most high-ranking gathering I've seen discussing cycling. High number & good quality of questions. [@CllrJimOrr](#) next [#sustrans](#)

– John Lauder (@John_Lauder) [September 24, 2013](#)

There were a number of presentations from local authorities. In mine I related some key lessons from Edinburgh such as: clear targets (15% to work by bike), a clear vision (SE2020) and strategy (ATAP), a budget commitment (currently 6% of the Transport Budget and growing incrementally) and partnership working. I was careful to emphasise the vital role that stakeholder representatives play and compared Spokes, without any irony whatsoever, to the Dutch and Danish Cycling Unions.

I found the presentations from Peterhead and Inverness to be particularly interesting. Peterhead is becoming a cycling demonstration town mainly by developing a network of cycle paths to enable everyone to get around by bike if they wish. In Inverness they are building a new UHI campus to the east of the city, and have arranged for a cycling bridge to be constructed over the A9 funded by developer contributions from the campus which struck me as very innovative.

Ian Aitken of Cycling Scotland spoke of the "bikeability" school training scheme which is growing in popularity across Scotland, and the Nice Way Code mutual respect campaign. This latter campaign has been widely criticised as inadequate, but the CAPS executive summary makes clear that it is not intended to be effective in isolation but rather that it is one of the 19 actions stipulated in the plan. It is also intended to complement the widely acclaimed Give Me Cycle Space campaign which had excellent adverts like this one.

And here is one of the Nice Way Code ads :-

At the close, the chair Stuart Knowles summed up the morning's discussion with some key points. First that the trip to the Netherlands had clearly made a strong impression on the participants and that a follow-up could be a good way of inspiring local decision makes across Scotland. Also that the

need for health considerations, and considerations of the budget savings that accrue from active lifestyles, could and should be factored into the debate and could be featured more prominently.

Personally, I think it might be worthwhile to get both the Health and Transport Ministers to attend the next summit wherever that will be.