

Government promises Cycling investment for Leith Walk



The Council had earmarked some funding for improvements to Leith Walk but some of these improvements had been deliberately stalled until such time as other monies from The Scottish Government were made available.

And against all odds that day has arrived.

Transport Minister Keith Brown today announced at Scotland's first cycling summit held here in Edinburgh how the additional £20m, recently allocated to cycling, will be spent over the next two years, and allocated £3.6m to the Leith Walk improvements.

The funding will enhance the Community Links programme run by Sustrans Scotland, which is open to bids from all local authorities across the country for infrastructure projects to promote cycling and walking.

It will provide a significant enhancement to the support The Scottish Government is already offering to local authorities to promote active travel and provides a real opportunity for them to plan ambitiously for the infrastructure improvements needed in their areas.

Local authorities are encouraged to look at developing flagship schemes that will make a difference to helping more people to walk and cycle for everyday local journeys.

In support of this aspiration, the Minister also announced that some of the new funding will be allocated to The City of Edinburgh Council's scheme to implement cycling improvements on Leith Walk. The Scottish Government will offer up to £3.6m to help realise the scheme's potential for promoting active travel along this key commuter corridor.

In [March](#) this year the council's Transport and Environment committee postponed plans for Leith Walk to allow for third party funding for what was described as a more comprehensive urban design solution including enhanced elements for pedestrians and cyclists was found. The council decided to get the final design approved by an oversight group comprising the Transport convenor, the Vice-Convenor and local councillors.

The £20m funding, which was announced as part of Mr Swinney's draft budget statement on 11 September, is in addition to the £58m already allocated to active travel in the 2011 spending review.

Scotland's first cycling summit provided local authorities, regional transport partnerships and other bodies involved in active travel with an opportunity to discuss what more can be done to make cycling a safe and attractive option for all, to deliver on the vision in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland of 10% journeys by bicycle by 2020.

Transport Minister Keith Brown said:-“This new additional funding demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to delivering infrastructure to make cycling a safe and realistic travel choice.

“We are offering local authorities the chance to promote active travel and encourage them to look at developing exemplar projects that will make a difference to helping more people to walk and cycle for everyday local journeys. We are also looking to local authorities to contribute too, given the considerable potential for local benefit from investing in their communities.



“The City of Edinburgh Council's ambitious plans for improving Leith Walk aims to deliver an exemplar commuter corridor. Subject to finalising designs, the Scottish Government is pleased to be able to offer support for this project which has

significant potential for promoting much enhanced levels of walking and cycling by across the city.”

✘ Welcoming today’s announcement Green MSP Alison Johnstone said:-“Leith Walk desperately needs this upgrade and I’m delighted that this project now has all the funding it needs. The council has responded well to feedback from cyclists and pedestrians and the designs are better than first planned. Let’s hope this positive cooperation can continue with plans for Princes Street and other routes in the capital.

“At the local authority summit, the Minister must do more to close the gap between the leaders and laggards among our councils. There’s no doubt that Edinburgh leads the way but all parts of Scotland need to be taking action and stand to gain huge economic and health benefits if cycling rates rise.”

✘ SNP MSP for Edinburgh Southern Jim Eadie, Co-Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Cycling, who is also a member of the Scottish Parliament’s Infrastructure committee, said:

“This money will provide a significant enhancement to the £58million support the SNP Government is already offering to local authorities to promote active travel and provides a real opportunity for them to plan ambitiously for the infrastructure improvements needed in their areas.

“I have campaigned vigorously for further support to encourage more people to walk and cycle for everyday local journeys and welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to delivering further infrastructure investment to make cycling a safe and realistic travel choice.

“There is considerable potential for local benefit from councils investing in infrastructure in their communities, which is why I am encouraging all of Scotland’s local authorities to look at developing projects for active travel.

“Scotland’s first cycling summit was a real success that provided local authorities, regional transport partnerships and other bodies involved in active travel an opportunity to discuss what more can be done to deliver on the vision in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland of 10 per cent of journeys by bicycle by 2020 – and this funding will go a long way in

supporting that.”

✖ Councillor Jim Orr, the City of Edinburgh’s Council’s Vice-Convenor of Transport and Environment said:- “I’m delighted that Edinburgh was given the opportunity to host the first ever cycling summit as we are making great progress in increasing cycling rates by making it easier than ever. The summit provided local authorities and Government agencies such as Cycling Scotland an opportunity to work together and learn from each other. Investing in cycling is a top priority in Edinburgh via our ongoing Active Travel Action Plan and we have committed to spend 6% of the entire transport budget for 2013/14 on promoting it.”

Dr David Brennan, the spokesperson for cycling grass roots campaign Pedal on Parliament said to The Edinburgh Reporter:- “Pedal on Parliament are pleased that the Government have seen fit to invest in the cycling infrastructure and that some of the money will be used in an exemplar project in Edinburgh.

“Obviously it is important that the Leith Walk project is done to a high standard and we hope that the council will look at improving the plans now that they have the extra money. We would like to stress that while we welcome the money it is still short of what is required to take Scotland to its goal of 10% of journeys being made by bike by 2020, so we hope this is just the start of the Government’s investment.

“Pedal on Parliament will continue to push for high quality infrastructure which will be made possible only by increases in funding and improved design and planning.”

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