

Cyclists asked to slow down on the canal towpath!



Cyclists on the towpaths of the Union Canal in Edinburgh are being encouraged to 'Share the Space and Drop their Pace' with the launch of a new considerate cycling campaign.

The Scottish Canals-led drive, launched today at Harrison Park in Edinburgh, aims to encourage the increasing numbers of cyclists that use the towpaths in the capital for commuting and recreation to be considerate of other users and match their speed to the surroundings. The campaign follows the success of the Towpath Code of Conduct, which was launched last year and offered a range of guidelines and safety tips to canal users.

The towpaths of the Union Canal, many of which were upgraded last year to a new all-weather surface as part of a £1 million revitalisation scheme, are more popular than ever and form a key part of the Sustrans UK-wide National Cycle Network. The routes, which have seen a 300% increase in use in the past eight years, play host to everyone from cyclists and joggers to dog walkers.



Supported by Edinburgh City Council, sustainable transport charity Sustrans, Spokes and Police Scotland, the campaign aims to encourage cyclists to be considerate on the paths by, amongst other things, managing their speed, being aware and respectful of other users and staying alert of both their surroundings and conditions on the route itself. Children from the canalside Craiglockhart Primary School took to the towpaths on their bikes to help launch the campaign alongside representatives from each of the partner organisations.

Alasdair Smart, Scottish Canals' Lowlands Canals Waterways

Manager, said: “The towpaths of the Union Canal are busier than ever and more and more cyclists are recognising the many appeals of the routes, which combine safe inner-city travel with the fantastic environments of the waterway.

“Of course, the towpaths are used by a wide variety of users and, while it’s fantastic that so many people are enjoying the routes, everyone – whether they navigate the towpaths by boot or bike – has a responsibility to ensure they do so in a safe and considerate way.

“The vast majority of cyclists are mindful of the needs of other users and follow safety guidelines but we just want to remind everyone that the towpaths are a shared space. As pet owners and families with young children also use the paths, they’re not the place for cyclists to try and set speed records. Likewise, some sections of the canal – such as aqueducts – are very narrow and it’s safer for everyone if cyclists dismount before crossing.

“Whether you’re travelling to work or just pedalling for pleasure, the towpaths offer a fantastic environment for cyclists. A little consideration and common sense allows everyone to enjoy them.”

Councillor Adam McVey, City of Edinburgh Council’s Transport Vice Convener, said: “The canal is a fantastic space for both pedestrians and cyclists, and is a valuable route for the city, but it’s important that all users respect one another.

“The vast majority of people in Edinburgh are considerate when using public footways and paths and slow down for other users, but we would encourage pedestrians and cyclists to make sure they travel on mixed use routes safely by staying aware of others.”

The campaign follows the launch of the Towpath Code of Conduct

last year – a document that sets out guidelines and safety tips for everyone from boaters and anglers to cyclists and walkers. Created by Scottish Canals in partnership with Edinburgh City Council and supported by Sustrans, Spokes and Living Streets Scotland, the Code also offers general hints and tips for using the canals, including what to do if members of the public see an animal in distress or would like to try their hand at volunteering. To date, more than 10,000 copies of the Code have been distributed. A digital version is also available for download from Scottish Canals' [website](#).

John Lauder, National Director of Sustrans Scotland, said: "The canal towpaths are a great facility for cyclists to use, whether for the daily commute or for leisure purposes. However, it is important to be mindful that we share these spaces with a variety of other users. Therefore, Sustrans is fully supportive of this campaign to 'Share the Space, Drop your Pace' and we encourage cyclists to be considerate when using the towpaths."

Posters and banners asking cyclists to 'Share the Space, Drop your Pace' have been installed along the length of the Edinburgh stretch of the Union Canal. It's hoped that the campaign will be rolled out on the towpaths of Glasgow's equally-popular Forth & Clyde Canal later in the year.

Local Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart councillor and keen cyclist Gavin Corbett was very much involved in the development of the Towpath Code of Conduct and was largely responsible for starting the campaign.

He said:

"As someone who cycles on the canal towpath every day, I know how much its popularity has grown. But we have to ensure everyone, no matter how he or she uses the towpath, is able to enjoy the routes to their full extent. A minority of cyclists are going too fast or cycling too aggressively for such a

narrow path and my plea to my fellow cyclists to slow down, be respectful of other users and enjoy one of the best routes in Edinburgh!”

