

# Spokes Bike Breakfast 2023

**Everybody knows that folk who love to cycle also love to get together to chat and eat, even early in the morning.**

That's why local authorities, employers, universities, colleges, and schools across the world often celebrate cycling by hosting bike breakfasts. On 13 June, Spokes and Edinburgh City Council invited us all to the first bike breakfast in the city since 2019. Cyclists came from as far away as Musselburgh to the City Chambers' quadrangle for tea and coffee, fruit, and breakfast rolls.

I was delighted with my egg roll and chuckled to see comments later on social media about whether there might be a real meat option next time! Edinburgh Bike Coop was on hand, and I saw at least two councillors queuing up politely hoping to get their bike chains degreased and oiled.(they may have been disappointed).

Many organisations were there, from the large ones such as Sustrans Scotland, Cycling Scotland, and Cycling UK in Scotland, to the small but high-profile groups such as the InfraSisters, the school bike buses, Spokes Party and folk from Critical Mass Edinburgh.

It was too early in the morning for long speeches. I said a few words on behalf of Spokes – mainly to thank everyone for coming, particularly the councillors who came in support. I did, however, comment on how lovely it is now in parts of Leith where traffic is being significantly reduced as part of the Leith Connections project. I'm sure as more people

experience how pleasant streets can be with limited traffic, they too will want that for their own neighbourhoods.

Cllr Scott Arthur, the “interim” convener of the Council’s Transport and Environment Committee gave the main speech. He talked about the combined challenge of the two 2030 targets: net zero and reducing car miles by 30%. He warned that that we should not let ourselves be distracted by the growing number of climate sceptics and conspiracy theorists. He went on to list various policies and major infrastructure projects that would contribute to these targets. I’m still not sure how these targets will be met without demand management mechanisms that reduce private car use – both the short trips and the commuting trips into the city from other local authorities.

My final message to councillors was simple – don’t compromise on designs when developing these schemes and ensure that everyone who wants to will be able to access the new cycling infrastructure promised for some parts of the city. A segregated cycle route may ‘only be 400 metres away’ but if that 400 metres involves cyclists, including children, sharing road space with HGVs then the cycle route is not accessible.

Sarah Boyack was the only MSP to come along. Spotting her in the crowd, I asked her to say a few words. She kindly did, and, without the microphone as it failed at the crucial point, she celebrated cycle campaigners such as the InfraSisters and called on the Scottish Government to continue to fund active travel infrastructure.

And with that, the formal events were over. When I left to head off to work the quadrangle was still busy with people chatting, comparing cycles, and eyeing up the wonderful cargo bikes.



All photos courtesy of Chris Hill



