



STRATHCLYDE CYCLE CAMPAIGN

Consultation - GCC Climate Change Strategy

Submission by **Go Bike** - Strathclyde Cycling Campaign

Introduction

This brief comment on the Glasgow City Council's Climate Change Strategy proposals registers Go Bike's appreciation overall of the serious attempts by Glasgow to tackle this planet threatening phenomena and the city's ambition to becoming a world leader in environmental sustainability. However, in line with our raison d'être, we mainly comment on **Key Theme 4: Transport**, and the place cycling has within this.

Objective

While generally agreeing with the aims on page 21, we feel that GCC will have to take a much stronger pro-active approach to '*Promote more sustainable modes of travel*' if it is to halt and significantly reverse the increasing contribution transport is making to greenhouse gasses and pollution. We also feel to simply '*..increasing awareness of the negative effects...of fossil fuels..*' is unlikely to have a sufficient or quick enough impact to generate the necessary life style changes.

Background - *Notes from Velo-city in Copenhagen (June 22-25, 2010) brochure [in italics]*

*Cities are responsible for 80% of the CO2 emissions in the world. So even though transport is about 20% of the other total carbon footprint [**'sustainable glasgow'** report 2010], in the city it is a significant part of the overall problem.*

Professor John Whitelegg's research shows that by switching the several million car trips being done worldwide every day to bikes would bring an immediate climate change again. This kind of mobility transformation does not depend on any technical, financial or logistics issue. It is purely a matter of political will.'

Key Theme 8: Planning and Built Environment and **Key Theme 9: Health and Wellbeing** would both be positively enhanced by having 'active travel' as one of their main drivers.

Whitelegg '..focuses on how promoting sustainable modes of transport significantly benefits health, climate, environment, congestion, liveability and economy.*' Jan Gehl, the Danish Urban Planner who has helped transform cities around the world, '*..insists that cyclists and pedestrians must have a central role when developing a city.*'*

Our Current Position

Go Bike believe that it will take a lot more than '***a need** for additional measures to reduce the need to travel; to maximise active travel (e.g. walking and cycling);...*' to achieve the headline objective in the Transport section and more than simply to '***Promote more sustainable modes of travel...***'

The primary requirement now is for solid commitment to implement current ambitious targets, backed by appropriate funding. There is a need to adopt a clear vision of Glasgow as a city for people first, with the built environment and services supporting this concept. Other places that have achieved this aim tended to have had strong political leadership, usually with a 'Champion' who has authority and power to lead the changes and get things done. This has been backed by popular support and positive officer actions.

The big problem will be breaking the historic link, going back to '1765, James Watt..*walking in Glasgow Green,*' which equates the exploitation of non renewable resources with power and progress. This contrasts with a true sense of prosperity and real quality of life, which in the end has to be sustainable.

Planning Policy

Requirements for development proposals to have '*accessibility..by..walking and cycling, and by public transport*' with larger developments '*..required to produce a Green Travel Plan*' are a good start, within this wider concept, and will need to be rigorously pursued.

The 'Vision for Active Travel in Glasgow' from work by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, has a lot of statistics which underline what a long way Glasgow has yet to go.

Cycling

The '**sustainable glasgow**' report has '*Glasgow..believed to have one of the lowest rates of bicycle usage within the UK.*' Having accumulated '*.230k of cycle routes..*' may be seen as a good starting point along with a number of pro-cycling policies and initiatives in the city. Unfortunately these tend to have had rather limited success so far, with nothing significantly new proposed. However Glasgow is benefiting from the recent rise in the profile of cycling nationwide, and improved press coverage, which has seen many individuals deciding to take up cycling on their own account. These new cyclists should be used as a focus to look at how the city can support and encourage their growth.

Policies

This leads to challenging the strategy here, in 'Environment Strategy', '**sustainable glasgow**' and other Glasgow policies. These seem to say '*The only way to get more people cycling is to give them traffic free cycle lanes.*' A view based on the common notion, mostly from non-cyclists, that cycling is intrinsically dangerous and that cyclists should to be separated from the traffic. Cycling is statistically no more dangerous than other ways of getting around town and this thinking needs to be reversed. The danger comes from not encouraging cycling. Climate change is just one of the many ills we now have to address because of the too easy, automatic default of taking the car; rather than life affirming active travel.

Motor Vehicles

Although superficially attractive, the car and 'passive travel' does not deliver its billing, or the needs of a vibrant community. If the perceived or even real danger from motor traffic inhibits the convenience of cycling then the traffic should be tamed and reduced. Any restriction of car use will be unpopular with entrenched views; but will be worth it for everyone. Other places that have succeeded in curbing the car have done so by making incremental gains, over time, while highlighting the benefits these give.

Motor vehicle emissions are worse in cities. Cars in stop/start traffic or jams, navigating the round about ways to get where they are going, then driving around looking for parking, accelerating away from lights just to brake for the queue at the next red are all inefficient, burning excess fuel. The benign alternative to these problems is convenient, direct, reliable, mostly quicker and enjoyable, carbon free travel by bicycle.

A cycle friendly city

Riding a bike offers freedom and delight. If anyone is put off cycling by the various obstacles they see then these are what need to be tackled and mitigated. In places that have high levels of cycling, the bike is treated as the simplest and most convenient way of getting around. If we are to catch up and reap the benefits here then cycling has to be put firmly at its agreed place, at the top of the hierarchy, after walking. The interventions in Glasgow have to ensure this is applied. The cyclists' point of view should determine the actions on the ground to make going by bike the obvious and easiest first choice.

Our Future Plans

If the laudable aims to tackle climate change transport issues are to be realised, they will need a lot more positive actions than simply carrying on with more of what is being done already and hoping for the best. The bicycle is a technology with a long proven history, and still improving. It's benefits can again deliver objectives in Glasgow, for health, well being and mobility, while turning the city into a more attractive place to live and work. Tackling Climate Change is the bonus.

Procedure

We note the first action point 4.1 is to establish an Officer Group. We believe this should be lead by a committed GCC elected member who can press for fresh thinking and support radical solutions.

Go Bike would also be pleased to be involved in any further considerations of these issues.

*Peter Hayman –
for Go Bike – 06/03/10*