



*STRATHCLYDE
CYCLE
CAMPAIGN*

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Scotland's National Transport Strategy: A Consultation

A Response by GoBike (Strathclyde Cycling Campaign)

Glasgow Cycling Campaign, now GoBike, was formed in 1991 to act as a voice for some beleaguered cyclists in Glasgow and surrounding areas and to try and promote cycling, in the face of a largely indifferent or even hostile establishment.

Times have changed considerably in recent years. Cycling has become more popular again and official attitudes towards the role of bicycles more positive. GoBike continues to pursue, as well as co-operate in, local cycling infrastructure issues on the ground. Now, in the wider context of this consultation, GoBike urges the Scottish Executive to share their vision of cycling as a primary part of Scotland's future mobility. (Q28)

The Introduction outlining the current situation and its problems points to an increasingly urgent need to address the dire consequences of past and present practices. The root cause of these has been the taking and burning of the hydrocarbons, laid down over millions of years, during the last century, and which continues unabated. At present it looks as if this profligacy will only end when the oil and gas become too hard to get at or the planet succumbs to the long term effects of this human activity. If transport policy is going to play its part in saving the day, if it is not already too late, then some very radical changes in wants and expectations will have to be made.

The juggernaut of current and projected traffic, its infrastructure and the lifestyles it has spawned is going to take some slowing down, let alone stopping or reversing. Measures and actions similar to those adopted in the past when on a war footing for survival will be needed. Only this time the foe is our own basic nature, historical inertia and widespread vested interests. This is a global crisis, of course, but Scotland has to deal with its own bit, and hopefully lead by example. (Q63)(Q64)

Scotland's recent success in legislating against smoking shows what can be done to protect people from the harm caused by others, once this is accepted. Using the internal combustion engine to provide mobility proves to be harmful to health of individuals as well as the community at large. Powerful legal remedies are needed to save ourselves. (Q29) Smoking and driving may indeed be seen as similar addictions. Both are usually started because they are thought to be fun, harmless and everyone else does it, but both can then be very difficult to give up. Both inhibit good health with life threatening long term effects (or dramatic short term ones in the case of crashes). 'Clean' fuels and other technological fixes bring their own costs and are limited, like putting a filter on cigarettes.

Highly developed, automotive machines can be very seductive in themselves, especially while they can speed along open roads and have space available at their destination.

They become less attractive if their use is restricted by congestion along the way or lack of parking on arrival. The links between providing facilities for motor vehicles and the increase in their numbers have been well documented. GoBike strongly advocates the restriction of road capacity and limited parking as a check on runaway car usage and help realize the SE 'road traffic stabilisation target', which should then be raised further. (Q62) Bicycle lanes have been successfully used to reduce road space and calm traffic. Several Scottish towns and cities have also been helped to keep moving by stopping up streets, reducing options for casual car use and controlling parking; so long as there is provision for alternative modes of mobility. (Q3)(Q16)(Q43) These measures encourage the return of urban cycling, where the bicycle's flexibility really comes into its own. Small cycle friendly adjustments to the infrastructure can then make riding a bike an appealing, appropriate, direct and rapid way to get around. (Q54)

The bicycle pre-dates the automobile and aeroplane, ironically helping their development through innovations such as ball bearings, chain drive and pneumatic tyres. Now it is probably man's most efficient converter of energy into motion. The appeal of mechanical and technical developments continues to produce improvements. Bicycles and HPVs (human powered vehicles) are evolving into various forms and can offer much towards a new order of freedom of mobility. Bicycles are egalitarian. Many already exist, probably more than there are cars, and new ones are within the reach of most pockets. Infrastructure costs for bicycles are also comparatively modest. Cyclists benefit enormously from smooth riding surfaces, but these can be of much lighter construction and take up much less space than those required for heavy motor vehicles. (Q11)

Fiscal control is the other significant tool the Scottish Executive can exercise to try and bring some rationality to transport use. The century long infatuation with motor vehicles and aeroplanes and the illusory freedoms they are supposed to bring has been fanned by completely unrealistic perception of true costs. Long term, heavy exchequer subsidy for infrastructure coupled with sustained ingenuity and clever manufacturing techniques have distorted normal value judgements. Fuel to make it all possible also appears to be available at just the cost of a pipe into the ground to suck it up, and the ores used are simply scraped from the surface of the earth. (Q48) These misconceptions, though patently false, have skewed the whole order of life into the 21st century. They have also lead to an assumption that being able to go almost anywhere, sitting passively in a comfy seat, at minimal outlay, is a natural right. Unrestricted car use is often now seen as 'essential'. Obstructions, like other traffic, cyclists or pedestrians, not to mention escalating road congestion become an annoyance, fuel and road tax an imposition.

Any attempt to prolong this unsustainable concept of freedom of movement through high capital cost schemes will lead to the general situation being made vastly worse. (Q59) Planned major road works including the officially discredited M74 extension and its associated, divisive EERR plus the highly criticized Aberdeen by-pass should now be cancelled. (Q4) The funds should be used to support sustainable transport options, which allow and encourage appropriate economic developments, social inclusion and reduce travel demand through alternative access choices. (Q14)(Q15)(Q1)

The massive challenge for government will be to re-order the pricing structure for transport to better reflect true costs, individual and environmental, so as to enable a move towards a more sustainable future. (Q46) The often mooted, but usually ignored, hierarchy of Walking; Cycling; Public Transport; Commercial Vehicles; Private Cars should govern all planning and action on transport matters. Development planning and

regeneration as well as environmental issues should all be determined by the hierarchy. This should encourage more local manufacture and services, with their own employment requirements, rather than long distance, centralized distribution and businesses. (Q1) In particular the effects on health, welfare and social inclusion should to be improved by instigating the higher options on the transport hierarchy. (Q15)

Cycling is not the easy answer. However in many ways this can be an advantage. Firstly, as with walking, progress depends mainly on the power of the legs, although the distances covered can be greatly enhanced. This requires effort, but like most effort it is rewarded. As cycling muscles become adept, over time, and the work becomes easier and indeed pleasurable. (Q29) This can lead to cycling being sidelined and thought of as mainly for sport and recreation. However cycling is a broad church which is open to nearly all and comes in many differing manifestations. (Q17) The common link between them is the cardio-vascular exercise, which leads to improved health. (Q2) Cyclists are reckoned to have a ten year advantage over a sedentary vehicle driver. Hills get easier to climb with improved fitness and may even be seen as contributing to the gains. Descending the other side adds to the pleasure and excitement.

Being out in wind and weather is a further challenge. But it means that cyclists are more aware of their environment and in touch with their surroundings rather than being cut off behind glass in an artificially controlled climate. It is also much easier to relate to and connect with other people face to face rather than when encased in a car.

Travelling by bike takes a commitment. Journeys are therefore more likely to be valued, than if an internal combustion engine were doing the work. Cycling may bring its own rewards but it still needs all the help and encouragement it can get, so that the individual and the whole community is better off. (Q58)

Pedestrians and cyclists have a lot in common. Both use their leg power to get around. They are mostly outdoors using similar sorts of infrastructure and can co-exist happily. Both are vulnerable and suffer from too many serious accidents involving motor vehicles. The evidence shows that when walkers and cyclists share facilities they both modify behaviour to co-operate. Accidents are rare and usually minor. These top two modes of the hierarchy now need to have their historical rights of way re-established.

Core path networks hold out great potential for more traffic free routes which, by their nature, are where people really want to go, as pedestrians and cyclists. They are another commendable example where Scottish legislation leads, as part of the new access opportunities in Scotland, and their development should be expedited.

Bicycles are technically vehicles and their natural habitat is on the roads. Unfortunately sharing with increasing levels of other traffic has become the main inhibitor to a more significant modal shift. Radical changes in mindset will be required if the bicycle is to be given priority on road space and seen as the preferred means of travel. Lethal vehicle speeds have to be curbed. Vehicle drivers should be made responsible, by their actions, for the safety of cyclist's and pedestrian and for giving them precedence. This practical way of putting the hierarchy into effect would produce a real modal shift. (Q53)

Promotion of cycling as transport should be at the core of a future national strategy and not an 'add on', just fitting in with historic circumstances and outdated values. (Q28) Cycling can act as a stand alone mode in many instances for local and longer distance

journeys but GoBike would also like to see cycling as an integral part of a wide range of travel options. The innate flexibility of the bicycle means that it can combine well with most other transport modes and greatly expand their journey potentials.

Bicycles and trains make an effective partnership allowing more widespread door to door journeys. (Q11) Continuing developments in rail and its facilities are needed to enhance this. (Q32) More possible ways for combining bikes and buses would also greatly extend the bike plus public transport choices over a wider area. (Q30)(Q31)(Q20) Bicycles on ferries also expand travel possibilities. (Q21)

GoBike would welcome any modal shift of freight from road to rail or water. (Q12)(Q37)

Cyclists use low priced air travel, like anyone else, but are concerned that it is only made possible by fiscal manipulation and that it is very damaging and unsustainable. (Q7)

Lots of cyclists also have motor cars. They are often well used to extend cycling activities. However the forgoing comments must hold for them as well.

Although the consultation questions have not been answered in order, or specific detail, it is hoped that the argument in favour of a bold pro cycling approach can be seen as applying to the many intractable problems raised by them. GoBike would be happy to expand on any of the points raised.

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