TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 24 November 2009

Session 3

£5.00

Printed and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by RR Donnelley.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 24 November 2009

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
† 26th Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Ian Aitken (Cycling Scotland)
Jackie Davidson (Scottish Cycling)
Dave du Feu (Spokes)
Peter Hawkins (Cyclists Touring Club Scotland)
Paul Zanna (Steer Davies Gleave)
Peter Zanzottera (Steer Davies Gleave)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

ASSISTANT CLERK

Clare O'Neill

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

† 25th Meeting 2009, Session 3—held in private.

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 24 November 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Interests

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): Good afternoon, everybody. I welcome you all to the 26th meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I remind everybody present, as always, that mobile devices should be switched off.

We have five items on the agenda, the first of which is a declaration of interests. I record thanks to Des McNulty for his contributions to the committee's work over recent months and I welcome Marlyn Glen as the new member. Do you want to record any interests, Marlyn?

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thanks. I have nothing to add to my entry in the register of members' interests.

The Convener: Thanks. I record apologies on behalf of Charlie Gordon. We expect to be joined by Alasdair Allan for a later item.

Active Travel Inquiry

14:01

The Convener: Item 2 is the beginning of our inquiry into active travel, with the first oral evidence session. We will hear first from the consultants who produced research on behalf of the Scottish Government, which has informed the development of the cycling action plan for Scotland. We will then hear from representatives of local and national cycling organisations. We have quite a number of questions to get through, so to use the time most effectively I ask members to keep questions fairly tight, if possible, and I ask that answers be reasonably brief, as far as possible.

I welcome our first panel of witnesses. We are joined from Steer Davies Gleave by Peter Zanzottera, principal consultant, and Paul Zanna, head of development planning for Scotland. Do you want to make brief opening remarks before we begin questioning?

Paul Zanna (Steer Davies Gleave): I think we do, thank you.

Peter Zanzottera (Steer Davies Gleave): I will just say who I am and where I come from. I wrote the method for the cycling action plan for Scotland research, which is one of the reasons why I am here. I checked a lot of the outputs, but I did not write all the documents that came out of the research. I am also employed by Cycling England and I run two fairly large projects in England: bikeability and the Cycle Training Standards Board. I am therefore the company's expert on cycling, and I do quite a lot of international and other work on cycling.

The Convener: Thanks very much. I will direct the first question to you. Can you give us a run-down of the remit that you were given by the Scottish Government for the research, and of the methodology and techniques that were used in developing the research? Can you briefly summarise the key findings?

Peter Zanzottera: The most important point from the remit and from our proposal that won the work is that if we want to know how to promote cycling, we need to ask people who do not cycle as well as people who do. A large proportion of the research focused therefore on two aspects: telephone polling of people who do not cycle, in order to get a large representative sample across Scotland; and a combination of focus groups of those who do not cycle and stakeholder focus groups of those who do cycle. The process culminated in the Cycling Scotland conference last year—not this year—which was the final phase of taking many of the research outputs and trying to

prioritise and rank them and to get the experts to say how they felt about them.

It is clear to everybody that the main reason that people give for not cycling is road danger. People are afraid of traffic. What they would most like to see is, first, segregated cycle lanes to make them feel safe, then other cycle lanes on roads or other cycle provision. That is a fairly clear statement of what came out of those groups and what people want. It is not a great reality check, but the volume of the feedback is important.

One other point in the research is highly important. The reason why people do not cycle is not the reason why they do, if you see what I mean. It is important to make the distinction between push and pull factors.

What pushes people not to cycle is road danger. There is a big list of things that they think need to happen to make them change their behaviour. A lot of travel behaviour change research shows that people are wedded to the ways that they travel and it takes quite a lot for them to change. Just sticking up a poster about the fact that it is healthier to cycle will not change the way that such people travel, because their habits are deeply ingrained, and when they travel they make the decision autonomically—they do not really think about it. Therefore, putting in place a lot of things to make people think about the way they travel will not influence most journeys.

What makes people cycle is health. The CAPS research showed that, in Scotland, 61 per cent of people—an even greater number than in comparable research in England—want to cycle because it would make them healthier. That is interesting, because the CAPS research and other research that has come out of the smarter choices, smarter places initiative shows that there is only a 10 or 20 percentage point difference between the fear-of-traffic ratings among people who cycle and among those who do not. People who regularly cycle think that it is dangerous; people who do not cycle think that it is even more dangerous. We cannot change the perception of road danger or some of the aspects of road danger, but we do know that a desire to be healthier is what makes people cycle.

That is a brief summary of the top-line stuff that we found.

The Convener: Will you say a bit more about how the different techniques that you used—such as approaching people through phone surveys as opposed to reaching people who were already cyclists—informed the research? Did they inform it in different ways?

Peter Zanzottera: Yes. The main big difference is between the qualitative and the quantitative approaches. The quantitative evidence is clear: it gives us good, percentage point guides as to why people do and do not do things. There is a strong breakdown in that evidence, but it is possible to break it down further and examine it in more detail.

The qualitative side is where the research becomes really interesting. The stakeholders—a bunch of them are coming in later—broadly agree that greater investment in cycling is needed, although they each prioritise that investment differently. There is a clear consensus that becomes divided when we get down to specific measures.

The focus group qualitative research was really interesting. One of the most interesting results was the discovery that people like cycling but do not like cyclists. Further examination showed a lot of conflict between road users, even more than I have seen in other places. It is probably comparable with London, where we have done detailed research. The animosity between drivers and cyclists was high—some rude words were spoken in the focus groups. That influences what people want to be. People are happy to go cycling, but they do not want to be cyclists. They associate cyclists with all kinds of things such as Lycra and technical specifications of bikes. That is actually a useful shot in the arm because, if we really want to encourage everyday cyclists, we need to break down the image that a cyclist needs an awful lot of kit and must look like this or that. We need to bring the aspirational cyclists a lot closer to the people who will make the behaviour change.

The focus group work gives us a clear idea of what people really think and feel about cycling. It comes out that they want to become healthier and that they see cycling as a fantastic way of doing that. In Scotland, probably more so than in England, there is a huge amount of sporting cycling and a lot of leisure and recreational cycling. That is easy for people—they can buy into and subscribe to those forms of cycling. They are quite happy to tie their bikes to the back of their car and take them somewhere, but it is difficult to turn that into a readiness to use cycling as a means of transport. To be honest, that is probably one of the biggest challenges that the committee faces. Scotland has a culture of sporting and recreational and leisure cycling, and quite a lot can probably be done to boost that and make it better, but getting everyday utility cycling going appears to be a big issue.

The Convener: We will go into many of the issues that you have raised later in the questioning. Does Paul Zanna have any comments to add on methodology?

Paul Zanna: It is probably worth highlighting the outputs that we as a company made available to our client. We produced a series of reports, which culminated in a summary report. The initial report

was on background research, which looked at differences in how cycling has been addressed in several different locations in Europe and further afield. We then produced a report on the focus group discussions and another that was based heavily on the analytical work that was done on the telephone and web-based surveys. That culminated in a cycling conference, which was summed up in a final report that presented reviews of the various specialists who attended it. That single summary report was made available to our client.

The Convener: I have a final question before I bring in other members. How does the work that you have done fit in with the rest of the body of research? Is there a lack of reliable research on the relationship between policies, infrastructure spending and whether levels of cycling go up or down? Is there enough research?

Peter Zanzottera: Broadly, there is. The issue is whether any of it is, for any reason, not applicable to Scotland. There is other research. For example, Cycling England has produced very good research on the economic benefits of cycling, which shows the level of returns that investment in cycling would produce and the level of savings in health costs that would be expected. The situation in England is probably broadly analogous to the situation in Scotland, but that work was not based on the population of Scotland, although the people who did it are based in Edinburgh.

Reams of paper have been produced on policy and what measures need to be taken to get things going. It is probably now a question of getting down to action. People need to enact those policies and make them happen. That is probably what the committee needs to focus on.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): Your background research report questions the application of the rational choice model of decision making to cycle-related transport planning and policy decisions. Will you explain that in more detail? If that is not the model that we should adopt, which model should we use?

14:15

Peter Zanzottera: The rational choice model is largely based on the theory of planned behaviour, and I have already alluded to one reason why it does not work. I did some research in Darlington that showed that for most people, only 1 per cent of regular journeys have any thought behind them, and it is only a few seconds' worth. The theory of planned behaviour is based on the idea that attitudes influence behaviour in a fairly straight-line way, although it goes slightly deeper than that. First and foremost, there is a short circuit in the rational choice model, because people who choose transport tend to do it in a highly autonomic way. Even if they use thought, they use heuristics, such as, "It is raining today, so I would rather use the bus, because I will get wet if I cycle."

The idea of beliefs and who you are informing your attitudes and your attitudes resulting in behaviour is probably a bit too simplistic. There are deeper levels to it. The first part of it is your attitudes, which are formed by social norms—the issue of cyclists being a long way away from people is one of those attitudes—and your perception of yourself. A whole load of external factors then come in, and you get to a point where you have intentions.

The other big hole in the theory of planned behaviour is that it does not take account of what is called the intention gap. Someone may intend to cycle—people in Scotland are probably full of good intentions to cycle—but something gets in the way: the car keys are on the table, there is trip chaining or something else gets in the way. The intention gap is not really resolved by the rational choice model, so a slightly different model is required that looks at heuristics, people's embedded ways of behaving and the intention gap.

In summary, the issue is perhaps that the rational choice model does not really account for the emotional side of it. There is no complete model that you can just plug in, but there are lots of models that can inform our approach. I worked on the issue the other week, and there are people who can help you—it does not take an awful lot. I could pass you some different models as additional evidence.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: You categorised the barriers to cycling as external and internal. Can you go into a bit more detail about what you mean by those different types of barriers?

Peter Zanzottera: On the internal barriers—to which I have just alluded—many people say that if you ask people who do not cycle to guide your policy, you probably will not get there. We know that when people become cyclists, many of their attitudes change. One attitude that people hold at first is probably, "I'm not fit enough," and others include, "It's too hilly," and, "The weather's too bad." We find that when people become cyclists their attitudes change quite a lot, because they become fitter and therefore they are not worried about those aspects; they find that it does not rain that often—says he on a day when it is chucking it down—and the hilliness becomes less of an issue. If you perceive the world from the inside of a car, your attitude to active travel is quite different. That is the internal architecture.

The external architecture is a pretty well known universe for everybody. It starts off with, "Where will I go on the road and is it safe for me?" There are many issues around that. Other concerns include, "Where will I park my bike? Will it be nicked?" Showers are quite an interesting example. We know that a lot of people think that they would like showers at work, but quite a few people who cycle do not need a shower when they get there, because they do not exert themselves that much or they do not mind being slightly smelly—I do not know what the reason is. The external factors are probably fairly obvious. They are to do with infrastructure and other pressures, but they are mostly to do with infrastructure and stuff that people would like to see on the ground to make it easy for them.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: My colleagues will go into some of those matters in more detail later.

Scotland obviously faces many challenges when it comes to cycling. I represent the Lothians, so we could look at the issue on a city basis, but we could also consider the many small towns and villages in Scotland, and then move on to our more rural areas. Are the barriers different in those different areas? Is one cycling policy for Scotland impossible, because we do not face a one-size-fits-all challenge?

Peter Zanzottera: Whether there should be a one-size-fits-all approach is dependent on scale. You could and perhaps should do on a national scale some things that are applicable to everything.

When we wrote the national standards for cycle training, which are also used in Scotland, we looked at a lot of techniques and expected outcomes for people who learn to cycle, and one issue was the difference between urban and rural areas. However, we managed to include them all in one way or another, even though some of them became optional.

When we read some of the focus group work, we found that there is a perception that people in Scotland have to drive because they travel long distances. However, it is worth remembering that the average trip length is still quite short. People do make long trips, for which the car is often necessary, but they also use the car for a lot of short trips, even though they could use a different mode.

A member of your next panel, who is sitting behind me, presented some interesting information at the Cycling Scotland conference last week, including the fact that one of the highest levels of cycling to school is found in Moray in the Highlands. If what you said were true, we would expect the highest levels to be in the middle of Edinburgh and Glasgow, but that is not the case. We get shaken off the fact that the main factor is trip length. For a lot of people, cycling to school or to work is probably an easy focus. In some parts of Scotland, people make the longer journeys that I mentioned. Rural road safety is a big issue for you, but we should concentrate on the shorter trips, which occur everywhere.

There are definite differences between areas. Some additional research that came out of the smarter choices, smarter places project shows stark contrasts in the fear of road danger and the other variables, but the biggest issues exist Scotland-wide. For the majority of children, the journey to school has potential to be a cycling journey, and for a lot of adults, the journey to work is probably a potential cycling journey.

One of the interesting things about changing people's behaviour is how we segment people. We can segment them by locality, but we can also segment them by behaviour, by hair colour or by many other things. If that results in behavioural change for travel, that is how we make progress.

The location-specific stuff can be used to push off your inquiry, because there are local policies and local actions that are specific to particular places. Scotland now has a reasonably good network of long-distance routes. However, in thinking about the gross actions, you should not be swayed by the locality stuff.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): What key recurring themes did you identify from your study of cycling cities that could be replicated in Scotland?

Peter Zanzottera: There is a rather interesting trend. If you invest £5 per head of population in cycling in one of your cities, and you do that for 20 years, you will get a heck of a lot of people cycling. Unfortunately, you probably do not have the luxury of having 20 years; you are where you are now.

It is interesting to look at the cycling towns and cities in England that have been funded by Cycling England. In three years, there has been an average increase of 27 per cent in cycling in those places. That is probably a useful starting point for you to consider, given where you are now. If you read the focus group report, you will see that everyone said that Amsterdam, or Holland in general, is a great place to cycle, but it would probably be difficult to deliver Amsterdam in the middle of Scotland right now.

The research shows that, if you want to get people cycling in your towns and cities, you need high-level political commitment to push things through and you must ensure that they are not stopped. Many policies to encourage cycling get stopped because they are proposed by officers at a low level and, for one reason or another, there is not the commitment to drive them through. High-

level political commitment, especially in the locality, is really important. You also need a broad partnership of people who clearly agree that they are all doing the right thing. Such a broad-church approach really works in England. Finally, you and your partners must have the requisite funding for the initiative and put in charge the people who will project manage and deliver it.

That is what we have learned from the example of other cycling cities. Certainly all the European cycling cities—Odense, a Dutch one that I cannot quite remember but which has a 47 per cent figure for cycling, Graz in Austria and even Trondheim in Norway—have had high-level political commitment from the start, and it is clear that if such commitment is in place, the funding follows.

Cathy Peattie: On high-level commitment, I accept that unless you have funding and partnership commitments, things will not work. Is that situation prevalent in the United Kingdom? Do you think of European examples rather than UK examples when you think of the kind of partnerships that are needed to make things work?

Peter Zanzottera: I am sorry—are you asking me whether the example of the UK cycle cities can be applied here?

Cathy Peattie: Yes.

Peter Zanzottera: I think so. The problem with always applying the European example is that, in many cases, development and transport are quite often covered by the same directorate there, and therefore are handled in a very different way from here. Big cities with mayors can lead on transport matters in a way that other cities cannot manage.

That said, in England, the people who control the cycling towns are high-level officials from the local authority and the primary care trust and other high-level stakeholders. You cannot take no for an answer. Junior members of staff who do not have the power to make a decision simply should not be there.

The other important thing is not to leave those who are involved in cycling towns on their own; they need help. Cycling England's remit covers providing not only funding but consultancy support, if needed, but stakeholders also need someone to check up on them, to ask how things are going and, if it is clear that the initiative is not going to be delivered, to look at what else can be done. Things should not be left to slip. Of course, those are the basics of project management, but one can be swayed off one's path by a whole load of other stuff. In making that criticism, I point out that I have worked in local government for a long time and the same thing has happened to me.

Cathy Peattie: What are the key factors in developing a cyclable road network? You have already mentioned, for example, the perception of danger.

Peter Zanzottera: In many places, people who developed cycle route networks built what they could when they could but, as we are now seeing, the result does not add up to a network. People are beginning to see through that approach, because such networks very often do not connect up and do not take people from where they are to where they need to be.

I admit that this is a personal view but, as one will see in many places, applying one type of infrastructure to a network is not a solution. There are many different types of cyclist and different types of people who cycle, and although such an approach gives some people what they need, that is not the case for everyone. The focus group work has shown that, if a cycle path runs beside a road, drivers expect every cyclist to use it. Some cyclists simply do not want to; they feel that they can handle the road environment and the paths slow them down and do not give them what they need. As a result, a differentiated network becomes important.

London has quite a sophisticated mapping tool, but other European cities such as Amsterdam have developed differentiated cycle networks with different levels of provision. They have quality off-road networks and also on-road provision. More must be done than has been done in Scotland to build a cycle network within cities or defined regions. That network must link up and make sense to people, and it must make sense to the different types of cyclist. There are at least two main types of cyclist.

14:30

Cathy Peattie: It seems that we are talking about bigger costs, because we are talking about cycle routes, not cycle paths.

How can policy makers be influenced to promote the best travel behaviour and encourage the growth of cycling in Scotland? You say that cycle pathways and routes on roads are needed. How can people be influenced to make decisions on such things in light of the costs that might be involved?

Peter Zanzottera: This evidence is probably the biggest influence that I have ever been allowed to have, and I welcome the chance to give it. It is important that members listen, understand and take issues away. Policy makers need to understand things.

Pound for pound, investment in cycling results in a far better cost benefit analysis than investment

in other road provision. That is backed up by research, which will probably be presented to members in many different ways. A cycle network can be achieved quickly and at a cost that is lower than the costs of delivering most other infrastructure projects. However, real and difficult problems to do with ordinary vehicle flow will arise. In some places, people will have to decide that the vehicle flow will be compromised or reduced, which is unpopular, because most people want to get to places quickly in their cars. To be honest, there is no way around that problem.

However, plenty of good examples exist. One lane on a dual carriageway in Exeter was removed, which has produced plenty of cycling, and the traffic there has not been seriously compromised. The centres of many cities in Scotland and elsewhere have been pedestrianised, which has brought benefits for everybody. There is a lot of resistance to reallocating road space and changing vehicle flows, and decisions on such matters are not easy. Decisions about bus lanes, for example, have been taken in Edinburgh, but the situation is different with cycling, as cyclists probably need a little bit less space than buses. However, space needs to be given to them, which requires people such as you to make a difficult commitment. You need to be fairly unwavering.

On policy making, investment must be made on the understanding that it should produce multiple benefits. Health costs are important. A little snippet came out the week before last: there has been a 10 per cent reduction in the number of the most inactive people in the cycling towns. In other words, inactive people are taking up cycling. It is interesting that the message can get through and that money can be got back, but it is difficult to identify the lead.

I say to policy makers that it is clear that people need a commitment to cycling, but not only in respect of the cycling network; various other things might need to be done. A little bit of publicity and probably some training are needed. A quality training system throughout Scotland would deliver a new generation of cyclists. If there has been a lost generation or several lost generations of cyclists, those people, many of whom are now parents, will think that they are not skilled enough to teach young people how to cycle. Investment is required, but before that, political commitment is needed. Scottish ministers have announced that, by 2020, they want 10 per cent of all journeys in Scotland to be by bike. Some things will have to be done before that is achieved. There are continuous and good networks and cycle routes, but a little bit of training and other things are required.

Marlyn Glen: The background research report mentions the possibility of a tipping point, at which natural social change would take over from policy and infrastructure initiatives in terms of increasing the number of people who cycle. Can you provide some more detail on that? Where might the tipping point occur? Do you have evidence that it exists?

Peter Zanzottera: The evidence from continental Europe is clear. There is, for example, no cycle training for children in Holland; it is only for immigrants. The country does not need to train its young people to cycle, because there is sufficient training from the adults in teaching children what to do, the road network is clear and forgiving enough, and cycling is identified as a way of life.

There are several tipping points: the situation that I have just described is the ultimate tipping point. It occurs when we reach a point at which cycling is so visible—when the amount of people who cycle reaches the 40 per cent mark—that the situation changes. In England, nearly everybody who goes to university in Oxford and Cambridge considers taking a bike. Nearly everyone who lives in York has a bike—of course, it is a well-to-do place, but cycling infrastructure exists there.

An interesting thing that is noticeable in places that have an identified cycling culture—which is probably another way to describe the tipping point—is that not everyone rides brand new bikes and is covered in Lycra. People ride different types of bikes: a bike is just a bike, and it is not about the latest spec or what you wear. The emergence of a cycling culture is probably the tipping point.

It is probably harder to identify somewhere in Scotland that has a cycling culture. Edinburgh probably comes closest to having such a culture, but it has not reached the point at which cycling is so visible that you naturally see it all the time and it is right in front of your eyes.

Marlyn Glen: That makes me think of St Andrews, which is a university town. A few years ago, it had such a culture, but I am not so sure that it does now; in fact, I am pretty sure that it does not. It certainly did a few decades ago, although I will not say when I was there. Everybody had a bike at that time, but now they do not.

Did your research explore people's views on whether the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change is an influential factor in encouraging them to consider cycling more often?

Peter Zanzottera: I would love to say that it is. Our research did explore that area, and a small amount of people said that it is a contributory factor, but very few of us make primary decisions based on our own commitment to being green.

Among the general population, that is not a unique selling factor. However, it is interesting that the health message has been hammered home.

One thing that we can all take away from the research is that there is a difference between the push factors and the pull factors. Being green is a pull factor, as is journey time and journey cost. It is fairly well accepted that in a recession such as we are currently experiencing, the amount of vehicle-based travel goes down. We know that those things are all factors but, sadly, people's instincts are more to do with how they feel about themselves. I refer back to the behaviour change model that we talked about earlier: the two factors that influence people's travel behaviour are their perception of themselves and the social norms around them.

Marlyn Glen: Can you comment on the challenge—as I would call it—of encouraging women and young girls to cycle? Did you find, for example, any difference in the push and pull factors in respect of the approach of women cyclists and non-cyclists?

Peter Zanzottera: I do not have the data on that broken down at the forefront of my mind, but I have evidence from other places. It is interesting to note that 37 per cent of commuter cyclists in London are women: in places where there is a cycling culture, the number of women who cycle is much higher than the norm. I did some research in Cambridge and found that the figure for women cyclists there was around 40 per cent. That is relatively clear.

One piece of key research from England showed that 80 per cent of the transport decisions for children are taken by women—the mothers decide. We need to address the fear of road danger in a way that speaks to mothers rather than to fathers.

I am an active father of two small children, and I think that the fear factor and the way in which transport decisions are made for children may be the most important influences for us to take into account. We do not need to convince policy makers or blokes who already cycle—we need to convince women who do not cycle that it is safe for their children to cycle. That is a big job that we have taken on with relish in England. A key part of bikeability and the year of bikeability is to recruit a mums army to articulate the issue, to talk about it on social networking websites and to deal with it in a completely different way.

We start with the issue of how people perceive themselves. It is important that women are able to talk about cycling in a different way. From a lot of the press, it is clear that progress is being made on that in parts of England and, probably, in Scotland. How people look, what they will wear, the different types of bikes that are available, and how women appear to one another and perceive their appearance have become important issues. Many of the 40-year-old men who are in charge of policy making for cycling do not really care about how they look when they turn up at a meeting—I hope that I am not looking too bad, as I have cycled quite a bit today, but that does not wash for women, for whom how you appear and how you benchmark yourself in society are real issues. Women also make most transport decisions for children.

Marlyn Glen: That is interesting.

The Convener: I am increasingly aware that we have not heard much from Paul Zanna. He is welcome to add to what has been said.

Paul Zanna: I am absolutely fine. Pete Zanzottera is here as the expert; I will chip in when I need to.

The Convener: Please feel free to do so.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I turn to some of the key findings of the CAPS research. Has the research identified how cyclist safety has been successfully tackled elsewhere?

Peter Zanzottera: The first and most important point is that there are push and pull factors. We cannot convince people that the road network is totally safe for cyclists because the people who are already cycling do not think that it is. Having said that, we know that there is safety in numbers: as cycling increases, the risk decreases. If we create a cycling culture, we should see a considerable decrease in the number of casualties, both per trip and per mile. The data in Scotland show that the number of cycling casualties has not gone up, which is a key point.

In many cases, what the public do is directed by irrational fear. One reason why people drive their children to school is that they are afraid that their children will be molested by strangers.

Rob Gibson: I asked whether the issue of cyclist safety has been tackled successfully elsewhere.

Peter Zanzottera: In many places, it has been tackled by means of segregated networks. In Holland and elsewhere in continental Europe, there is a systematic approach to laying out cycle networks and to tackling traffic speed on roads that are shared by motor vehicles and cyclists. We can start to tackle the issue by looking at the way in which we lay out our cycle networks and the guidance that we issue prior to that, and by dealing with traffic speed. There is another key measure, which is probably not in members' gift: in continental Europe, drivers are deemed to be at fault to start off with. It could be said that those

aspects provide proof that cyclist safety has been taken on.

The trouble with casualty statistics is that showing a safety benefit from a piece of work means that it must be proved that an accident did not happen, which is difficult. A long time lag is needed to allow casualty statistics to show that. Neither cycling demonstration towns nor anything else can help to shed light on that issue, so we must reach to examples elsewhere.

14:45

Rob Gibson: I am interested in whether any statistics exist, as they would at least give us something that we do not know. If you do not have them to hand, perhaps you could provide them in writing.

Peter Zanzottera: I took away from the Cycling Scotland conference last week the point that an important piece of work for Scotland would be to gain a clear handle on how to tackle road safety and to prove to the public that safety for cyclists has been taken on.

Some statistics exist, but they must be inferred from, which is a little difficult. Some statistics can show that trained cyclists are less likely to be involved in crashes, but that is still pushing the data. It is difficult to make that clear correlation. Where infrastructure has been provided to manage traffic speed down, local 20mph schemes have on average achieved something like a 50 per cent reduction in injuries to vulnerable road users.

Rob Gibson: A reduction in the vehicle speed limit might be one reason why cyclist safety has been tackled in other places.

Peter Zanzottera: Yes. A reduction in vehicle speed is important.

Rob Gibson: I am sure that many people think that.

I have a side question about pedestrian safety. In our difficult circumstances of being without cycle lanes, cyclists use pavements when they should not. Do you have statistics on that?

Peter Zanzottera: I do not think that the statistics are sufficient. If you are talking about segregated cycleways, the statistics probably do not provide enough information, but we have found a huge amount of complaint. Are you talking about non-segregated cycling on the pavement—full stop?

Rob Gibson: Yes.

Peter Zanzottera: Underreporting is a known problem. In general, the conflict is not between vehicle users, so people have no compunction to record it. If people are asked whether cycling on the pavement is safe, most pedestrians say no and that it is horrible and most cyclists say that they do not like it because they become involved in conflicts. Anecdotally, people do not generally like that or shared use.

The statistics show very occasional pedestrian deaths and cyclist deaths from collisions on the footway, but they are so dispersed that pulling a strain of road casualty statistics and reaching a conclusion from them would be very difficult. There is a lot of nuisance and probably a huge amount of unrecorded injury, and the recorded injury statistics do not take us anywhere.

Cathy Peattie: I am interested in the speed issue. As a mother—I am now a grandmother—I was concerned about my children going to school on their bikes because of the speed of other vehicles. You will be aware of the 20's plenty scheme around schools in many communities. Would extending that encourage all parents—not just mothers—to allow their children to cycle to school? Do you accept that cycling on a pavement is the only way for many children to stay safe?

Peter Zanzottera: It is generally accepted that cycling on the pavement is okay until the cyclist is aged about 10, before which the police do not generally enforce the requirement to cycle on the road. Although it is odd, it is important to talk about equity. A central plank of cycle training in England—level 2 training in Scotland is exactly the same—is that by the age of 10 you should be able to cycle on the road. We should give people the skills to cycle on the road and we should make the road conditions capable of accommodating them. A big part of ensuring equity and promoting independent transport is reducing vehicle speed, but that is not the whole story. People are more scared of proximity and acceleration. Members can see from the work of the focus group that making the space and the place for cyclists is important.

The equity issue goes the other way too—loading the footway with cyclists makes it inequitable for those who walk. It is a largely articulated argument now that we should be able to get young people to cycle on the road around the age of 10. If they are part of a cycling culture they will do it before then, but we should empower them to do it. The training system is built to teach them how to handle themselves on the road. It is up to you, as MSPs, whether you regard that arrangement as equitable.

The Convener: Is not there an issue here about whose voice is loudest? Pedestrians and cyclists are forever seeing drivers failing to indicate, driving over the speed limit and shooting red lights, but the voice of the driver who is annoyed by cyclists is heard more powerfully in our culture. Is that not part of the problem?

Peter Zanzottera: Absolutely—you will see in the tabloid press various articles that back that up. They say, "Cyclists should be charged for using their bit of the carriageway because we are charged." In transport planning circles it has long been known that planning for vehicles is well articulated and understood, yet here we are at the start of the 21st century talking about planning for bicycles when we should have been doing it all along. Bicycles have been managed out of the system and we are trying to manage them back in. That is probably where the inequity and unfairness lie.

Rob Gibson: Your research identifies practical issues, such as the weather and hilliness, as key barriers to cycling in Scotland. Why is that the case when other countries where cycling has a far higher modal share, such as Denmark and Germany, share those physical characteristics?

Peter Zanzottera: Plenty of continental Europe is as hilly as Scotland and has a lot of cycling. I reiterate that the barriers to cycling that Rob Gibson mentioned are perceptional and can be dissolved by other means. People are influenced by seeing others around them cycling. I know of unpublished research that shows the differences in perception between cyclists and non-cyclists. We could probably pull off a dataset from those data to illustrate that. I expect that the smarter choices, smarter places project has a similar dataset that shows that there are, between non-cyclists and cyclists, perceptional differences in respect of weather and topography. People say that cycling is too difficult for whatever reason, which feeds into the rational models that they use to justify their arguments. However, if you want to get fit through cycling, why not do it somewhere hilly because you will get fitter on shorter journeys? Topography and weather are smokescreens to some extent. If you can get people beyond those barriers, the barriers disappear, if you see what I mean.

Rob Gibson: We can explore that subject with others, too. I represent the Highlands and Islands. About a third of the people of Scotland live in small towns in rural areas. I do not know whether that is a higher percentage than in England. In that light, we need to consider whether engineering solutions that have been proved to work in other places might have difficulty working in countryside areas. After all, the third of our population who live in rural areas need to get fit, too. Have engineering solutions to the problem of how to increase cycling been successful for both city and rural routes in other countries?

Peter Zanzottera: I recall that one message in the focus groups was that blasting a way through granite to create a cycle path is not really cost-effective. I think that that fits with your point—

Rob Gibson: No. I am not thinking about granite at all. As a matter of fact, in the area where I live the rocks are all old red sandstone. In my area, the bulk of people—90-odd per cent—live on the east side of the Highlands, within perhaps a mile of the railway. Although there are lots of hills in the area, it is possible to create cycle paths: engineering solutions would need to deal with physical difficulties, but without blasting anything.

Peter Zanzottera: I am sorry if I gave a slightly frivolous response.

The important point about rural places is that, although space is constrained, there are often several alternatives, such as bridle-paths and other corridors. In rural areas, using footways as cycle paths is a different proposition because not many people walk along parts of those footways. Converting footways into cycle tracks can work in rural areas.

Another point to take into account is that, although having a car for travelling long-distance journeys is arguably more important to people in rural communities than to those in towns and cities, people in rural areas still need to make short journeys. The issue is encapsulated by the cycling to school statistics, which are highest in places such as the Highlands and Moray. Therefore, it is possible to create an impetus. People often choose to cycle in places where the road network is not loaded at peak times.

Some slightly different solutions might need to be chosen in rural places. Within urban areas, space is constrained and a different set of solutions is required, but if there is a will within those places to create a solution, a solution will be found. We have some examples of solutions that have worked very well. For example, in England and in Scotland, cycle training started off as an urban phenomenon, but that is no longer the case and there is no reason why it should continue to be so. Essentially, cycle training teaches people to cycle on the roads in their locality. We need some practical solutions, but I think that the issue is really about creating the will that reflects the fact that an awful lot of cycling already happens in those areas. Rather than being a problem, rural areas are part of the solution.

Rob Gibson: That leads into my last question. The overall results suggest that

"promotional activity of various kinds has helped to boost significantly the investment in engineering".

Can we be given any examples of such successful promotional activity?

Peter Zanzottera: Across the board, the most useful promotional activity that is comparable is England's bikeability project—I work as a paid consultant on the project, so people might want to

discard my comments—because it helps us to understand why people make decisions about allowing their children to cycle. Understanding the difference between customer and consumer is another issue that bikeability has tackled. Bikeability is a consumer product that helps people to be more confident about their children and themselves cycling in traffic. The project has worked well. Some other aspects of Cycling England's work are also very successful.

Scotland is immensely successful at promoting leisure cycling and sports cycling; people have got that message. The focus group research indicates that people think that cycling is a leisure activity that they can be persuaded to take up, and there are successful examples.

On investment in behaviour change, there is generally an acceptance that soft measures give a better cost benefit analysis than do hard measures, although I am not saying that you should do one rather than the other. The other thing to be really clear about is the scale on which soft measures, such as publicity, are carried out. Many local authorities and other bodies do little things to try to change big behaviour, which does not work. We know that big behaviour can be changed through national campaigns—there are ways of doing that.

15:00

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): You have presented your evidence in a clear and compelling way. Do you think that the Government has paid enough heed to it? Do you think that the draft cycling action plan for Scotland goes far enough to address the issues that you have been talking about? Could the policies and plans in it be improved?

Peter Zanzottera: I think we have answered those questions already in some ways. The plan is there, but the funding is not. That is a clear answer.

Alison McInnes: Did your research identify a minimum level of public sector expenditure that would be required to get to the target of an increase in the percentage of journeys taken by cycle to 10 per cent? Can you give us a handle on that?

Peter Zanzottera: I cannot. It is necessary to ask whom that 10 per cent would include and how they would change their behaviour. It would be foolish to apply a figure only to increasing the percentage. Clear segmentation, systematic analysis and cost benefit appraisal are needed. You need to understand that you are getting a return for your money. I think that £5 per head is a realistic figure to achieve that increase within a town and within a six-year timescale. The committee is examining a 10-year timescale, so you need to think about expenditure per head around that level.

The figure of £10 a head from Cycling England is made up of £5 from Cycling England and £5 match funding, which is important. On the question who foots the entire bill, it is important to say that this is not just a transport issue. The benefits come back in health and other areas including culture, media and sport. At the moment, Cycling England is funded at £60 million a year, which is delivering quite a lot of benefit. We know that the cost of universal cycle training in England is probably about £50 million a year. Next year's figure will be £14 million.

You can attach figures to the shopping list and work out what your intention is, but we are talking about a large amount of money.

Alison McInnes: You are saying that money is not everything, but that we need some sort of step change in the budget that is available in Scotland, and you would align that with political drive and buy-in by partners from throughout society.

Peter Zanzottera: Yes.

The Convener: One argument that has been made is that bringing about change is not a question just of spending more money but of spending existing budgets differently. Current attempts to add up the various pots of money that are spent on the promotion of walking and cycling still end up with quite small figures. Do you buy the argument that we simply need to spend existing budgets differently?

Peter Zanzottera: No. To achieve a sea change, you are going to need to do something different. There will need to be lead investment of a large proportion.

The other half of the question is whether existing budgets could be spent more wisely or amalgamated. I think that they could. For instance, at the moment, cycle training in Scotland is funded from a load of different budgets and is carried out by different people. Unfortunately, there is confusion at the product end; people are not clear about what they are getting. Cycle training is what I know loads about, and I think that you could amalgamate the funding for it and make it rational. A lead on that from the top would be really helpful.

Other bits of budget are spent on analogous areas, and from my local authority experience I can say that such budgets should be amalgamated. There should be an understanding of health promotion budgets and perhaps also of how prescriptions fit into the picture. Is it important to prescribe an intervention that includes cycle training, to get someone cycling, rather than a different intervention?

Some existing budgets could be pulled in. It is a question of building a broad understanding that the promotion of cycling has a good policy fit with everything—but you are probably already close to having that understanding. Some commuted budgets could be brought together, but lead investment is also needed.

The Convener: I assume that your local government experience was south of the border.

Peter Zanzottera: Yes.

The Convener: Given that local authority spending in Scotland is no longer ring fenced to any great extent, if a larger pot of money were available—whether the money came from existing sources or was additional—who should get the job of deciding how to spend it?

Peter Zanzottera: That is a difficult question. Devolved budgets and local responsibilities are part of the architecture in lots of places. People must understand that a drive to increase the proportion of journeys that are taken by bike to 10 per cent will not be led from the Scottish Parliament but will need to be delivered by local communities and local government—and perhaps even regional government to a small extent. If people understand that and buy into the target, they will spend the money; if they do not buy in, they will not spend the money. I would expect a target to go with the funding, whether or not the funding was ring fenced—ring fencing can work both ways.

Cathy Peattie: We have talked about influencing policy makers. You have been involved in local government, so you will be aware that politicians and other people make decisions that are based on their priorities or on the priorities of the communities that they serve. As a local MSP, when I try to campaign for families to get a crossing on a busy road, I am often told, "It's not a priority because not many families use that road. If someone is killed or injured on the road, we'll consider your request."

I agree that priority should be given to the promotion of cycling, but how do we make that happen? How do we create the partnership that is needed? It is clear that local government must take the lead locally, but I am not convinced that we can get people to spend money locally and take the policy forward. Have you got any gems that would encourage people? I am not a pessimistic person, but I am not sure how we can get people to take on board the issues that you raised and prioritise them in their budgets.

Peter Zanzottera: In the context of political argument and will, I think that we must talk about inequity and the evidence that things are not fair or safe. I think that it was in 2002 that Britain overtook Germany to become the fattest nation in Europe. We know that transport plays a huge part in people's health and that many people are disfranchised, in that they do not have an active choice about how they get about. That is a basic social inequity.

I have yet to meet a politician who does not agree that cycling to school—and teaching children to do so—should have high priority. We can all agree that certain areas are important. The idea that there is a lost generation of people who could be cycling is interesting, and many people relate to the argument because they can remember when there was more cycling.

The effects of transport decisions are there for everyone to see, and they involve not just climate change but how people live and relate to their neighbours and communities. Community severance, for example in Glasgow, has been clearly documented.

A huge amount has happened that should put cycling and walking back on the agenda. It is for you to go away from here to lead the debate and think of the bigger picture. A crossing outside a school is one thing, and I have worked on a lot of campaigns for them in the past, but inequity of transport is another. General ill health is an important issue, and people are ready to accept the message that it is healthy to use active travel. The CAPS research shows that people are convinced by that, but they need someone to make it safe for them or enable them to make the decision.

Cathy Peattie: I was using the crossing as an example of making the decision. I accept what you are saying and that we need to move forward. I was just wondering about who pushes or encourages people into making such decisions.

The Convener: As there are no further questions, I thank both Peter Zanzottera and Paul Zanna for their time in answering questions today. Peter, you made a final comment about taking the issue forward at a political level, and that is largely the objective of the inquiry. In due course, I am sure that you will be glad to see that we have produced some constructive recommendations for the Government. Meanwhile, thank you for your time.

15:11

Meeting suspended.

15:14

On resuming—

The Convener: We are still on agenda item 2, which continues with our second panel of witnesses on the active travel inquiry. I welcome

Dave du Feu from Spokes, Peter Hawkins from the Cyclists Touring Club Scotland, Ian Aitken, who is the chief executive of Cycling Scotland, and Jackie Davidson, the chief executive of Scottish Cycling. I welcome you all to the committee and thank you for joining us.

Do any of you want to make any brief opening remarks?

Dave du Feu (Spokes): I will give a brief summary of our evidence.

We have based our evidence on international research that compares America, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. The research was conducted by Professor John Pucher and Ralph Buehler in America, who examined cycling statistics and policies in those five countries over many years. They divided the factors that they feel influence the level of cycling either positively or negatively into three categories. The first category concerns the creation of a safe and welcoming cycling infrastructure on the roads and, to some extent, not on the roads. The second category concerns the belief that planning policies, land use policies and general traffic policies must all be integrated with the cycling policy so that, for example, necessary journeys are relatively short and there are restrictions on car traffic. The third category concerns soft measures, such as maps, employer initiatives and so on.

Professor Pucher says that, if those three categories are all implemented together, the sum will be much greater than the individual parts. The first category is the most important, however, and it involves the spending of money. Our contribution in that regard might be on funding and methods of funding. We have done quite a lot of research and work on that, so I hope that that will come up during the questions.

The Convener: I am sure that we will have an opportunity to explore all of those issues, but first I want to ask about the difference between intent and delivery. Over the years, we have seen umpteen documents from the Government and local government that state that there should be more active travel such as cycling and walking. Why are we not there yet? Why has that not happened?

Ian Aitken (Cycling Scotland): You are right that a number of policy documents have expressed that desire. The cycling action plan includes an aspiration that there should be a 10 per cent modal share for cycling by 2020. That brings us back to funding. As Peter Zanzottera said earlier, if that plan is to be delivered, people must feel safe in the road environment, and there are various ways of reallocating road space to ensure that they do. Peter Zanzottera also mentioned perception, which is important as well. Statistically, cycling has become safer over the past 10 years, but the general public does not perceive that to be the case—instead, they think of it as dangerous.

We need to improve the infrastructure that is already in place and tell people about it and how safe cycling is. That does not mean, of course, that we cannot make cycling even safer.

Peter Hawkins (Cyclists Touring Club Scotland): Many strategy and policy documents at a local and national level state that walking and cycling are to be top of the hierarchy. However, when it comes to the spending priorities, we have found that they go to the bottom of the hierarchy and receive less than 1 per cent of the transport budget. That is as much of a puzzle to us as it is to anyone else. We cannot answer why; those who make the decisions can.

The situation is not recent; it has been going on for at least 12 years to my knowledge and possibly longer. However, now is a critical time due to the confluence of climate change, health issues and the terrific pressure on public spending. We have to ensure that something happens that is different from what has been done before.

Dave du Feu: The convener is correct that cycling has not increased in Scotland overall, but what has happened is that it has increased in some places—in Edinburgh, for example—while it has fallen in others. We heard a lot from an earlier witness about the relatively high levels of cycling in small rural towns. That is true but, if you look back at censuses from 10 or 20 years ago, you find that the levels of cycling in such towns were considerably higher then than they are now. If you look back 20 years, you find that cycling in Edinburgh was virtually non-existent.

Over the past few decades, therefore, cycling has gone up in Edinburgh and down in quite a lot of other places. We must consider the reasons for that. In Edinburgh, we have seen consistent, though not very high, spending on cycling. Although the provision is far from satisfactory, we have at least a widespread visible infrastructure on the roads in Edinburgh, with coloured surfacing for cyclists almost everywhere. We feel that that has engendered a change of consciousness in the Edinburgh population, in that cycling is not seen as quite so eccentric but as a bit more normal and the sort of thing that anybody might do. We feel that that view has been working its way through and is one of the main reasons why we see higher numbers of cyclists in Edinburgh.

Jackie Davidson (Scottish Cycling): As a membership organisation, albeit that our focus is largely on the sport of cycling, we feel that the inspiration of champions such as Sir Chris Hoy has definitely increased cycling's profile. We are

working in partnership with key agencies to use the inspiration of such champions to encourage people to participate in cycling. Our membership has grown by 13 per cent over the past year, with a 33 per cent growth in under-12s and an 18 per cent growth in the number of women. The general view may be that there has been no huge increase in cycling, but there is a recognisable upwards trend.

We had a large participation ride in Glasgow in August, for example. The city was shut down and 7,200 people took part. A month later, about 6,000 people participated in a pedal for Scotland ride from Edinburgh to Glasgow. We can use to our advantage the fact that cycling's profile has never been higher. We see evidence of that nationwide, with a huge growth in cycling across the United Kingdom.

The Convener: In his opening remarks, Dave du Feu mentioned some of the barriers that exist, such as physical, financial, policy and, indeed, psychological. Do other witnesses want to add anything to that? Is there a common view of what the barriers are, or do the different organisations have different opinions on that?

Jackie Davidson: The evidence that was presented did not spring any surprises. Some of the research findings on why young girls do not participate in cycling for recreation or sport supported established views. A surprising finding, though, was that the weather does not have as big an impact in putting people off cycling as some of us perhaps believed. That is certainly good news for Scotland.

Peter Hawkins: Probably the main barrier has been the lack of finance over so many years. If we had invested more in cycling, we could have had a much rosier picture. As Dave du Feu from Spokes just said, the investment in Edinburgh has paid off and brought increases in cycling levels.

We have talked about the weather and hilliness as barriers, but we cannot factor them in very well. Other parts of Europe that have hills also have high levels of cycling. As for the weather, I have a wonderful slide of Copenhagen that shows a bunch of people cycling to work whose faces and bodies are covered in ice. That shows that the weather has not put them off. The weather and other factors are possibly used as excuses rather than as genuine reasons.

Dave du Feu: We must be careful about linking cycling as transport with cycling as sport. A previous speaker mentioned that there is a perception in Scotland that, for somebody to cycle to work, they have to be really fit and wear Lycra. The cross-country comparisons provide no evidence that countries that put a lot of effort into cycling as sport thereby achieve cycling as transport. It is a completely separate issue.

Ian Aitken: It is a separate issue and it comes down to safety. People feel unsafe on the road, especially non-cyclists. We must think about how to improve the current infrastructure and encourage more people to cycle as a result.

We must also work in different settings in which it is easier to encourage more people to cycle, such as active travel to school and the workplace. Some of the results that Peter Zanzottera talked about were from the Sustrans "National Hands-up Survey Scotland", which was carried out last year. It gave us some good baseline figures for levels of cycling throughout the country, such as the fact that 9.7 per cent of children in the Highland Council area cycle to school. That is the result of a lot of interventions in schools by a number of different organisations to encourage more children to cycle to school. We also need to encourage more employers to encourage their workforces to cycle to work by giving the employees the right infrastructure to make them want to do it.

The Convener: Could the measures that you just mentioned—or others—give us a quick hit? Could the Scottish Government or local authorities do anything tomorrow that would cause a quick increase in cycling levels?

Ian Aitken: Peter Zanzottera talked about a lost generation of cyclists. We have to increase the number of children who get cycle training. At the moment, there are three levels of cycle training in Scotland. Two are relatively new, and they are all aligned to the United Kingdom national standard. We estimate that about 50 per cent of children in Scotland get one level of that training, but we need to move towards more children getting all three levels, particularly level 2, which is administered by Road Safety Scotland; Cycling Scotland administers the other two levels.

The Convener: Why are children not getting that training?

Ian Aitken: There are a number of local reasons, such as headteachers not being comfortable with children cycling to school or not being able to fit it into the timing of school life.

The systems in England and Scotland are quite different. In Scotland, we use a volunteer network to provide cycle training. That network is supported by road safety officers, active schools co-ordinators and school travel co-ordinators, so we have to consider how we support it. In England, the set-up is different: cycle training is paid for through grants through Cycling England and local authorities. We need to consider whether we can work more effectively with our volunteer network and the organisations that work with that

network, and increase the number of children who get the training.

Dave du Feu: It is relatively cheap to provide on-road, coloured infrastructure that is seen by everybody every day and, therefore, makes an impact.

I cannot agree that cycle training is a quick hit. I am all for such training but, however many children are trained, unless the road system looks and feels safe and welcoming, parents will not allow their kids to cycle. We must remember that virtually all my generation cycled as children and then stopped, so even if all children learned to cycle that would not mean that they would cycle for ever. If there is a safe and welcoming cycling infrastructure, people will cycle, whether they are young or old.

Peter Hawkins: That is almost what I was going to say, although I see the issue slightly differently. No matter how much training we provide, if the road network is not safe to cycle on, people will not take up cycling.

It is like having a product to market and sell: if your sales pitch focuses on cycle training, and you are telling people that cycling is a wonderful thing and that they should do it, you must have a product behind that. The infrastructure must be cycle friendly in the first place. The infrastructure should come first: you have to have a product before you can market it properly and sell it. I am really saying the same thing that Dave du Feu said.

15:30

Ian Aitken: Dave du Feu and Peter Hawkins are both correct. Cycle training is one of a number of interventions that must take place in the school setting, but the cycle infrastructure must be in place, too. A good example in the Edinburgh area is Towerbank primary school in Portobello. There is a promenade, so kids can easily cycle to and from the school, and parents feel comfortable letting them do so. Towerbank therefore has an extremely high rate—about 17 or 18 per cent—of children cycling to school.

Alison McInnes: We heard from the previous witness panel that the issue of the roads not being safe is to a great extent a perceived problem. However, you suggest that we should go ahead and pour quite a lot of resources into dealing with that. Is there a danger that, in doing so, we would make the roads in which we had not yet invested feel even less safe, and put more people off cycling? Can you relate to the previous panel's view of road safety as a perceived problem rather than something that requires a lot of funding?

Ian Aitken: Yes. One of the projects that we are working on is a behaviour change communications campaign to encourage parents to let their children cycle to school, on the back of the cycle training and infrastructure that are already in place in the school setting.

Our research shows that parents are apprehensive about letting their children cycle to school. We have piloted the campaign for a couple of years to find out the best way to address those fears with parents, and it seems that a number of measures are important. First, the research shows that parents want to know that we are talking to drivers, telling them to slow down around schools and to be aware of children who cycle to school. The other important element is the travel planning that takes place between the parent and the child to find the safest way to get from home to school. We need to emphasise that there are safe routes out there, while we improve the infrastructure that is already in place.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am interested in the work that you have done with non-cyclists to find out why they do not cycle and what barriers to cycling exist. Have any of your organisations carried out any work with that particular group to find out what we need to do to create a cycling culture in Scotland, in which cycling is viewed as more of a natural choice than it is at present?

Dave du Feu: I would not say that we have carried out any work on that, but we have had feedback. Our organisation has been in existence for 30 years, so we have had many new members who are novice cyclists or new to cycling, and they sometimes write comments on their membership forms. We have heard from a number of people that they thought of cycling because they saw from the infrastructure on the roads that people are expected to cycle, which makes it feel safer. I do not know whether it is actually safer, but the fact that it feels safer encourages them to get started.

Peter Hawkins: We had one case of a born-again cyclist who worked in the office. She suddenly decided that cycling to work might be a good idea, and when she took it up she found that it was really such good fun and she got so much fresh air that she wondered why she had not done it before. In response to the question in the CAPS survey about cyclists paying tax, she said, "It should be the other way round. Cyclists should get paid because they have to put up with all the rubbish on the terrible roads that we have, and all the puddles." That was a new cyclist's view of the situation.

There is a lot in that, particularly the business of the existing road structure. Cyclists can see how many potholes there are and how badly maintained the roads are. I am not talking about the trunk roads, because they are all wonderful: it

is the road network in the towns and the cities that is extremely poorly maintained. If we are to spend money, we need to spend some on putting those roads right, so that cyclists at least have a decent, smooth surface to ride on and do not get splashed by all the puddles. It would benefit pedestrians, too, if the streets were improved and put in a decent condition.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am interested in the steps that we need to take before we get to the newly converted cyclist. How can we drag in the type of person who thinks, "I would never cycle—that is not for me"? Has any research been done on what we have to do to change the minds of that group of people and get them into the cycling culture that we all want to see more of in Scotland?

Ian Aitken: It is clear from the cycling action plan research that people understand the health benefits and might like to cycle, but it comes back to safety.

Among the projects that we work on every year is bike week, which takes place in June. As part of bike week, there are 260 events in Scotland, in which 39,000 people take part. Many of those events are about encouraging people to cycle to work. Some people might cycle in with colleagues who buddy them because they are apprehensive about using the road network or do not understand the path network—they might not know that there is a path close to their house that offers a direct route to work. There are examples of encouraging people in that way, but the issue comes back to non-cyclists' perception that cycling is unsafe.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am keen to pick up on that point, which Alison McInnes touched on. I want to find out whether it is unsafe to cycle or whether it is perceived to be unsafe to cycle, because the solution will be entirely different depending on what the problem is. Is there a safety issue, or is there a perception that there is a safety issue?

Peter Hawkins: That goes back to the issue of safety in numbers. If we look at the statistics, we find that in countries in which there are high levels of cycling, the casualty rate is lower or—as we have found in Scotland—does not go up, even when the level of cycling goes up. That means that, overall, cycling has become safer.

However, we are talking about statistics. How people perceive statistics is a quite different matter. We must tackle perception. As the CAPS survey showed, people perceive safety to be the number 1 issue, so the number 1 priority must be to tackle the road system and make it safer for cyclists by putting in cycle lanes and taking whatever engineering measures we can to make junctions easier to approach for and friendlier to cyclists, for example by replacing roundabouts with signalised junctions.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Has research been done to show that that would deal with people's perceptions? We can do a lot to tackle crime but it sometimes has no bearing on perceptions of crime. We come back to the issue of whether a cyclist's solution to making the network safer would deal with a non-cyclist's perception of the problem.

Ian Aitken: Although the perception exists that cycling is unsafe, the recently published road casualty statistics for 2008 show that the number of cycling casualties has reduced by 33 per cent over the past 10 years, so there are indications that it is becoming safer to cycle. We must work out how we tell that to the general public and non-cyclists who think that it is unsafe to cycle. That is what I was referring to earlier. We realise that when we talk to parents, we have to let them know that if they make good travel choices involving local roads and the local path network, which are relatively safe, children can travel safely to school.

Dave du Feu: The feedback from our members is that the roads in Edinburgh feel a little bit safer than they used to. We get specific comments on that.

On actual safety, another big problem is that most safety statistics are given per mile whereas a more realistic measure would be per trip. If someone goes shopping by car, they might drive quite a long way, but if they go shopping by bike, they will cycle to the nearest shop. If someone goes for a weekend away by car, they might drive for three or four hours, but if they go by bike, they might cycle for three or four hours and go to a closer destination. We should therefore consider the number of casualties per trip rather than using the traditional measure of the number of casualties per mile.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am interested to know whether your organisations believe there are lessons that we can learn from England or from our neighbours on the continent. There are probably many, so perhaps you could tell us the top lesson that you want Scotland to develop, whether it relates to policy, institutional change or whatever.

Ian Aitken: In England, funding has been focused on cycle demonstration towns, so all the funding is targeted in specific areas. As we heard earlier, the initial results are encouraging, because they show increases in cycling in those towns. In Scotland, we have smarter choices, smarter places towns, which are looking at active travel and sustainable transport as a whole, including cycling, walking and public transport. If we do not have a lot of money, it can be helpful to focus

money on specific towns and cities. However, I return to the point that, if we want more people to travel actively, given that we understand the health benefits, we must consider the budget that we allocate to active travel.

Jackie Davidson: Some interesting points came out during the CAPS research when we discussed segmentation and segregation. It boils down to the point that was made about perception and the need to identify the real issue. We kept coming back to two themes—the infrastructure on the roads and safety. I agree with everyone else that the two go hand in hand, in the same way that, as Dave du Feu said, there is a perception that a person has to dress in Lycra in order to be a cyclist. There has been a long, hard battle to dispel that myth.

The research brought out an interesting point about how people perceive themselves in relation to vehicles and drivers. There are numerous examples from European countries in which the car user is secondary to the cyclist. In such places, the cyclist has the right of way, and if there are accidents, the responsibility falls on the side of the driver unless there is proof to the contrary. I am sure that members have all seen images such as those of the cycle racks outside a Copenhagen cinema that has a bike park rather than a car park, with some 6,000 bikes of every kind imaginable. We can only aspire to such things, but we can make some interventions now to encourage more cyclists on to the roads and break down some of the barriers for non-cyclists.

Peter Hawkins: There was an inspirational series of lectures and an exhibition earlier in the year called "Dreams on Wheels". People from Copenhagen came and showed us what has been done there and in nine or 10 other cities. Cars had gradually been eased out by a series of quite small measures, such as restricting parking, restricting parking at junctions, and not just putting in cycle lanes but making the whole environment more people friendly for both cyclists and pedestrians.

I suppose that it all comes down to the kind of city that we want. Do we want a city full of cars or a city that people can move around? Do we want, as Jan Gehl put it, cities to be places where people want to be rather than places where they have to be? We should bear in mind that in doing things for cycling we might well be doing things for pedestrians and, indeed, for the whole ethos of our towns and cities. How to bring those elements together is a lesson that we can learn from other places. Of course, they have done it over 20 to 25 years, and it will be difficult for us to get to that stage now. We really need a boost to bring ourselves up to the level of the many cities that are already in that happy condition.

15:45

Dave du Feu: In comparing the approach in different countries, I suggest that the research that I mentioned at the beginning is really the number 1 thing to look at. Indeed, we quote that really crucial paper in sections 2.1 and 2.2 of our submission.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: My colleagues will discuss CAPS in more detail but, for the moment, can you tell us your key message about it? Is it a good, worthy or successful plan, or do you feel that much more work still has to be done?

Ian Aitken: CAPS has set a 10 per cent target but we need to understand where those people will come from. Moreover, given the Scottish household survey's finding that only 2.3 per cent of journeys to work are by bike, we need to know the current position and picture in each local authority in Scotland. After all, each local authority measures in a slightly different way the number of people who cycle. Before we try to aim for that 10 per cent, we need to baseline and understand how many people in Scotland are actually cycling.

Dave du Feu: Whether we have CAPS or any other policy, the question is whether it will be implemented in local areas. In that respect, there is a tendency to think that we are talking only about local authorities when, in fact, we should be looking at a lot of other agencies, including British Waterways, First ScotRail and so on. All those implementing organisations have to be incentivised in some way to implement the cycling action plan, and our experience over many years suggests that the key in that respect is availability of targeted funding. I can go into that in more detail, but perhaps not in my response to this question.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: My colleagues might pick up on that later.

Jackie Davidson: As Dave du Feu has more or less said, the critical issue is the implementation of some of the actions in the plan. One of the strong messages from CAPS is the necessity for a joined-up partnership approach and, again, I could cite a number of examples in which the wider needs of all user groups have not been considered in local transport and planning. Having a much more co-ordinated and joined-up partnership approach will perhaps allow us to use the resources at our disposal in the best way possible. We certainly all agree that we need an initial boost to address some immediate issues.

Peter Hawkins: We need to find out where cycling fits in with our existing institutions and organisations. At the moment, the benefits of cycling are felt mainly in the environment, transport and health departments of not only the Government but each local authority.

However, the budget for cycling must come from somewhere. Unless all the departments that benefit are prepared to chip in and share the cost, there will be a problem. No one wants to spend their budget on cycling. Transport, for example, might ask why it should pay all the money, given that cycling benefits health and the environment as much as anything else. As I phrased it in my submission, the issue is that cycling must be "owned" by someone—we must find out who will own it and who will pay for it. It may be possible to have partnership and co-operation, but it is important to decide who will be responsible for driving forward the changes and ensuring that things happen.

It worries me that, faced with a 10 per cent target, local authorities will ask how they can achieve it. There will, therefore, have to be interim targets—3 per cent every three years, let us say. If local authorities cannot afford to employ even one cycling officer, they will struggle on their own to meet the 10 per cent target. That is why we must have a broader overall strategy for implementing the changes.

The Convener: Members have questions for the individual organisations represented on the panel, beginning with Cycling Scotland.

Marlyn Glen: The CAPS report states:

"health experts and academics readily acknowledge that the current levels of investment will not increase levels of cycling."

What level of funding would be required to meet the 10 per cent target in the CAPS report?

Ian Aitken: There is a correlation between the 1 per cent or so of transport funding that goes to cycling at the moment and the 1 to 2 per cent of people who cycle. Like a number of other agencies, we have signed up to a paper that suggests that 10 per cent of transport budgets should be spent on active travel, if we want to bring about a step change.

Marlyn Glen: That is helpful, especially given the evidence that we heard earlier.

I turn to the different objectives. The achievement of objective 1—to create communities where people can cycle safely—is dependent on the buy-in of transport and land use planners, engineers and elected members. Do you have a plan for achieving that objective? How can it be achieved, given the competing demands from motorists and heavy goods vehicle and bus operators?

Ian Aitken: There must be political will in local authorities to achieve it. The City of Edinburgh Council is a good example of that. Recently, it signed up to the charter of Brussels, which commits the city to achieving a cycling modal share of 15 per cent by 2020. On the ground, we must look at reallocation of road space—how road space is used, and how cyclists and pedestrians fit into the mix.

Marlyn Glen: Edinburgh is coming out of the discussion pretty well. It is an example of good practice, but should we be dependent on waiting for individual local authorities? Do we need something else?

Ian Aitken: The board for the cycling action plan includes the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, representing local authorities. Local authorities must sign up to the cycling action plan; I understand that there will be a process for them to do so. They will have to look at the actions that they will need to take to reach the 10 per cent target.

Marlyn Glen: Objective 2, which we have already covered to some extent, aims to make cycling the "natural choice" for daily journeys. How successful are cycle training and promotion initiatives likely to be without major investment in infrastructure?

Ian Aitken: In Scotland, we train 50 per cent of children to level 2 at the moment. We recommend that that figure must increase.

Lots of promotional activity is taking place around cycling, including our campaign to encourage children to cycle to school, which backs up the cycle training. Our promotional activities have hugely increased the number of people who take part in cycling as a leisure and recreation activity. As Jackie Davidson said, the annual pedal for Scotland event, which goes from Glasgow to Edinburgh, now has 7,000 participants. Five years ago, it had 1,000 participants, so interest in cycling in Scotland and in organised cycling seems to be growing.

Marlyn Glen: That is a dangerous line to go down. Do you mean that cycling is growing without a major investment in cycling infrastructure?

Ian Aitken: It is growing in terms of organisation. There is something behind it to involve people so that they know that they can take part in cycling and in organised cycling events. If people have the perception that cycling is dangerous, the question is how we overcome that perception. Do we organise events and activities that make people feel comfortable to be on the road network? That is one way to do it, but another is to improve the road network.

Jackie Davidson: Year on year, the number of roads that are closed for pedal for Scotland is increasing. That could in itself be an indicator that, because there is a greater opportunity to cycle on closed roads away from the traffic, people are more comfortable about taking part in the event.

The Convener: I assume that Ian Aitken would agree that although increased participation in such an event is a good thing in many ways, it does not demonstrate the achievement of what is described in CAPS as objective 2, which is to make cycling the "natural choice" for daily journeys. The two do not really relate to each other.

Ian Aitken: Indeed. Leisure cycling is obviously quite separate from utility cycling. We can gain benefits from leisure cycling, and a huge number of people are interested in leisure cycling. We are considering how we can try to influence their travel choices so that they move into utility cycling, but we are not at the point at which cycling is their first travel choice.

Dave du Feu: I will comment on Marlyn Glen's earlier question about funding. The issue of the total level of funding is incredibly difficult. Peter Zanzottera first of all said that it was £5 per head in England, then he remembered that there is match funding of £5, so it is actually £10 per head. Spokes research put together all the main sources of funding in Scotland, and we are currently at between £3 and £3.50 per head across Scotland. It is impossible to establish a figure for European countries—there are difficulties because regional money, national money, special money, perhaps European money and general local authority money is going in—but the figure ranges from £5 to £25 per head, so we are way below that level.

The Convener: We have specific questions for Spokes on funding, but thank you for that answer.

Cathy Peattie: I will continue with some questions for Cycling Scotland. Objective 3 deals with encouragement and incentives. What evidence do you have that people do not already know that cycling is cheap, healthy and good for the environment, but simply choose to travel in other ways? How do we win people's hearts and minds and move things forward?

Ian Aitken: It comes back to safety and how safe people feel on the road and path network. Research indicates that people are aware of the health messages and that they would like to cycle because of those health messages, but if they do not feel safe on the road network, they will not do it.

We have to promote the fact that cycling, particularly in urban settings, is probably the fastest way to get around as well as being healthy. It is about making non-cyclists feel comfortable on the road network.

Cathy Peattie: Do you think that pursuing additional legal powers and extra enforcement, as is suggested in objective 4, is really the way to develop a cycling culture in Scotland?

Ian Aitken: The question has been asked previously about where liability falls between motorists and cyclists. Moving towards presumed liability on the motorist's behalf could be a step forward, because the cyclist is the vulnerable road user.

16:00

Cathy Peattie: We heard earlier that speed may be an issue. Would reducing speed limits help with safety? Would doing so make motorists more aware?

Ian Aitken: We are certainly in favour of 20mph zones around schools, and we would be interested to see how that limit could be rolled out in urban areas.

Dave du Feu: The idea of presumed liability is common in several European countries, but it is unpopular because motorists obviously do not like it. One of our members, who is a retired advocate, came up with a fantastic variant: the idea was that the person who is in charge of the heavier vehicle should be presumed liable in a crash. For example, if a lorry was in a crash with a car, the lorry driver would have to take the greater responsibility. Similarly, a cyclist would have to be more careful than a pedestrian. That solution would satisfy nearly all the arguments that people have made against the idea of presumed liability. An extra onus would also be put on cyclists in their interactions with pedestrians.

Cathy Peattie: That is interesting.

Dave du Feu: The idea is innovative.

Cathy Peattie: Can CTC provide us with more information on the workplace cycle challenges that it has organised in the south of England? Can any lessons be learned from those challenges that could assist in increasing cycling to work in Scotland?

Peter Hawkins: You have got me there. I have heard of those challenges, but I am afraid that I cannot elaborate on their details. We have cycle-friendly employers schemes in Scotland, but I cannot give you any more details about the workplace cycle challenges. I am sorry.

Cathy Peattie: The committee would be interested in finding out what is happening elsewhere so that we can give examples in reporting.

Peter Hawkins: Okay. I can look up information about the matter for the committee.

Cathy Peattie: That would be helpful.

Peter Hawkins: You would like information on workplace cycle challenges.

Cathy Peattie: Yes, please. We would be grateful if you would feed that information back to the committee.

CTC is a United Kingdom-wide organisation. Can you outline any lessons that could be learned from England, Wales and Northern Ireland about how to increase the modal share of cycling?

Peter Hawkins: The modal share of cycling throughout the UK is almost uniformly low, although London has been an outstanding example. Cities such as Cambridge, Oxford and York have promoted cycling over the years and have achieved quite spectacular successes, but they have tended to be rather specialised. They have concentrated on cycling because they have certain advantages—they are university cities and are flat, for example. There has, of course, been an enormous increase in cycling in London because of congestion charging. It has been a big factor. There is talk of extending what has been achieved in central London more widely into the boroughs.

The Convener: I want to pick up on an earlier comment that Peter Hawkins made about the state of our cities' roads. He was fairly damning about the condition of roads in our cities and their impact on the experience of cycling. Would I be right in thinking from my experience in Glasgow that what he said is true with respect to the edges of roads, which cyclists have to use, whereas if the parts of roads that drivers use are in a bad condition, they will get fixed? Is that a fair perception?

Peter Hawkins: It is and it is not. The edges of roads get more wear than any other parts because of buses continually pulling in and out, for example. Most manholes also seem to be towards the edges of roads. Individual faults can be reported to the customer lighting and roads enquiry centre, or CLARENCE, but on some roads, a cyclist would have to stop every two yards to report a fault. There are machines that can measure the degree of deflection for vehicles. Those need to be used. However, the problem is really the need for more funding to repair roads. The City of Edinburgh Council keeps telling us that it knows what needs to be done but just does not have the money to do it. That is the top and bottom of it.

The Convener: Your submission places great emphasis on 20mph zones and calls for them in all residential areas. Is that a top priority because of the impact that that would have on traffic conditions overall?

Peter Hawkins: That fits in with the hierarchy that is set out in "Cycling Infrastructure Design". Most cycling organisations agree that reducing traffic speed and volume is at the top of the hierarchy. That is followed by infrastructure measures—road engineering measures—that make roads more cycle friendly. When I emphasise 20mph zones, I merely reiterate what is in the hierarchy.

Alison McInnes: I have questions for Spokes. As you have said, Spokes has been a part of the development of Lothian's cycling policy and infrastructure for more than 30 years. What have been the most and least successful cycle policies and infrastructure developments in that time?

Dave du Feu: The most successful infrastructure has been the on-road, coloured, widespread and visible cycle facilities. At a public meeting that we held a year ago, Marshall Poulton—the City of Edinburgh Council's head of transport—displayed a slide that showed a slow increase in cycling rates until about 10 or 15 years ago and a faster increase in the past 10 to 15 years. Those figures corresponded almost exactly with the fact that, in the first period, Edinburgh built its off-road cycle routes on disused railway lines, and in the past 10 to 15 years, the council has put all the stuff on the roads. Everybody sees that on the roads every day, so it changes the population's general consciousness. When people talk in their coffee room at work about whether cycling is dangerous or a bit eccentric, cycling suddenly feels more acceptable because everybody sees the facilities every day.

Policy is more about politics. In our 30 years' experience we have found that individuals make a big difference. Once or twice, the council's transport committee convener and the council's director of transport have both really understood cycling as a means of transport: most politicians and senior officials see cycling as a leisure or fun activity, but not as transport. The combination of Councillor David Begg and George Hazel as the head of transport was fantastic. They gave an impetus not just to bus lanes but to cycle facilities.

We have also been through much more pessimistic periods, in which we have just managed through our pressure to keep investment in the basics going. It is unfortunate that we cannot ensure the combination of people; that depends on who takes the relevant positions. However, the council can, to an extent, be encouraged to keep at it if funding mechanisms provide money that more or less must be used for cycling.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am interested in whether policy implementation was successful in Edinburgh at those times because a specific cycling budget was provided or because other budgets were used in a cohesive way that considered all users together rather than put the motorist first.

Dave du Feu: The issue ties in with our experience of comparing local authorities. Different funding streams are available. An enthusiastic local authority uses the funding streams to best advantage, whereas an unenthusiastic local authority does not use them. For example, the per capita allocation that is made to each local authority for the Government's cycling, walking and safer streets scheme can be used for anything under the scheme. On average, local authorities use a third of that for cycling. Some local authorities put nothing from it into cycling, while others use part of it to build infrastructure—for example, one-way streets—that has a negative impact on cycling. Basically, there is a funding stream, but how it is used very much depends on the personalities and policies in local authorities.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Alison McInnes will ask more about the budget, so I will not encroach on her territory any more.

Alison McInnes: Before I move on to the next question, can you identify a well-intentioned cycle project in the Lothians that ended up being unsuccessful and counterproductive?

Dave du Feu: I cannot bring one to mind, but I am sure that there have been such projects.

Alison McInnes: That is fine. What do you think of the balance in the cycling action plan between the development of the soft measures that we have discussed, such as encouraging the take-up of training, and hard measures, such as cycle lane developments?

Dave du Feu: I cannot remember sufficiently the content of the cycling action plan to answer that, but I point to the research from Professor Pucher, who says that the prerequisite is a "safe and welcoming" cycling infrastructure.

Alison McInnes: So, do you think that that comes first and should be top of the hierarchy, then we should follow through with—

Dave du Feu: No—they should all be worked on at the same time, but the soft measures will be far more successful if the infrastructure is "safe and welcoming".

Alison McInnes: Spokes has presented the committee with detailed written evidence regarding cycle funding and the Scottish budget. Do you have any views on the funding of the longer-term cycling action plan?

Dave du Feu: There are two separate aspects: the total amount of money and how the money is made available—the funding mechanisms. The question of the funding mechanisms is rarely considered, because people normally just look at the total. As I said earlier, the total per head in Scotland is considerably lower than that in other countries.

In our budget submission, we asked for an additional £20 million in the next budget. That is based on what we see as political and practical realities. More than £20 million could probably not be successfully invested in the next financial year because people would not be sufficiently geared up to doubling the existing level of investment. However, for the longer term—the next spending review and so on—we very much go with what Ian Aitken or Peter Hawkins said regarding the report from the Association of the Directors of Public Health, the Sustainable Development Commission and the Institute of Highway Engineers, which suggested that 10 per cent of transport budgets should go on active travel. That sounds like a huge amount of money, but we must think of it in the context of climate change and energy security.

A report from the UK industry task force on peak oil and energy security comes from big British companies, which talk about the likelihood that oil supply in Britain will fall by about 5 per cent a year within a few years. That is a really serious situation that must be worked towards. We need significant money to improve conditions for local travel. That points to the 10 per cent figure being a realistic one that should be considered in the spending review.

Do you want me to say a bit about funding mechanisms?

Alison McInnes: I am interested in funding mechanisms and in monitoring the success of funding.

16:15

Dave du Feu: Funding mechanisms are covered in paragraph 3.5.2 of our submission, which may be a section to which members should pay attention. Two things are required: first, a basic level of investment must be ensured across the whole of Scotland, including the local authorities or organisations that are not quite so keen or interested; secondly, opportunities must be provided for larger cycling projects by more enthusiastic local authorities and others and for innovation and so on.

On ensuring a basic level of investment across Scotland, two sources are available now that are potentially very good. The CWSS fund, which we deal with in paragraph 3.5.2.a in our submission, is potentially a very good fund, but there are some problems with it and we feel that it needs to be tightened up. I have mentioned a few examples of that.

The other source is the money that goes to Sustrans, which works not only with local

authorities but with a huge range of organisations, such as British Waterways, which makes better conditions for cyclists. The advantage of money going to Sustrans is that it all goes to walking and cycling, unlike money that goes to the CWSS fund—until it is tightened up, not all that money will go to walking and cycling.

Unfortunately, under the present Government—if I am allowed to say this—the capital funding for Sustrans has been cut by 50 per cent, which is incredible.

As our submission says, a former minister with responsibility for transport said that Sustrans's work was "High standard, on budget" and was delivered to tight timescales. It has produced hundreds of small-scale projects across Scotland, working with local authorities and others. We would, therefore, like that funding to be restored.

The second element involves providing the opportunity for larger schemes by enthusiastic local authorities and providing for innovation and so on. In that regard, we have proposed a kind of bidding fund. There is one previous example of that sort of fund in this area. Many years ago, for one year, the Scottish Government had a cycle challenge fund, to which any local authority could make bids for funding for any innovative scheme to boost cycling. The Government produced a report that gave the fund a positive evaluation. Until then, ScotRail had been very negative on cycle carriage, but it applied for and received £500,000 from the fund, which it used to greatly improve cycle carriage capacity on the Edinburgh-Glasgow-Aberdeen triangle. That was not only great for cyclists who used those trains, but it completely changed the culture within ScotRail. Until that point, it had viewed cycling negatively but, since then, it has seen cycling as a market into which it can tap.

As we say in paragraph 3.5.2.d, with regard to the spending review, it is important that cycle-funding opportunities be built in to all other transport funding mechanisms. In our submission, we give the example of the public transport fund, which ran for several years but does not run any more. Under it, any local authority—and other bodies, I think—could apply to the Government for large local public transport schemes. When Sarah Boyack was the minister with responsibility for transport, she changed the rules for the public transport fund so that, if a local authority integrated cycling into its public transport bid, it would be more likely to succeed. That was a tremendous innovation and, for several years, the public transport fund was the biggest source of funding for cycling projects.

Thank you for bearing with me during all of that. Basically, I am saying that the nature of the rules in the funding mechanisms is really important. We think that the four mechanisms that we outline in paragraph 3.5.2 could make things tighter.

Rob Gibson: How can the success of Scotland's professional track and road cyclists be harnessed to encourage people to take up cycling as a form of transport?

Jackie Davidson: Ambassadors such as Chris Hoy have increased the profile of cycling. In the public statements that he has made to encourage people to take up cycling, Sir Chris Hoy has not put too much stress on cycling as a sport. He supports the case for cycling for recreation, participation and transportation, which has encouraged people to get their bikes out of the shed.

Work remains to be done on the issue of people who engage with the sport but who do not use their bike as a form of transport at the moment. However, if we turn it around and look at people who engage at the recreation and participation level who could be encouraged to use their bike as a form of transport, it might not be an easier hit, but there might be a bigger market among the number of people who are participating in cycling as a sport. We could use that to our advantage to build on the perceptions that people might have of what they can use their bike for.

Rob Gibson: Given that we have already heard that there might be more people in Scotland who are involved in sports cycling, there could be quite a hit if we get them to use their bikes for travel.

Jackie Davidson: There could be.

Rob Gibson: Can any figure be put on the current use of bikes for sport?

Jackie Davidson: We have not done any research on that, and it was not covered in the CAPS research. We have an overall target for the work that we want to do at British level with a commercial partner and a multimedia partner, and there are opportunities to use that as a resource to target the one in three households that have Sky to encourage them to engage at recreation and participation level and to use their bikes for transport. The good example that was quoted earlier was when London was shut down on a number of occasions, most recently for the Skyride. Over two years, the Skyride has seen an increase from 36,000 to 57,000 people this year cycling around the city. We can tap into that and use it to encourage people to use their bikes to travel to work, and as a lever to encourage our towns and cities to look at their infrastructure and increase safety for people who wish to use that mode of transport.

Rob Gibson: Some people might not like to be bribed into supporting Sky, but that is another matter.

There is an issue about the conflict between the development of sports cycling and cycling as a form of transport in the sense that some sports cyclists put their bikes on to the back of a car to go to a velodrome, if there is one, or to a mountain bike centre, of which we have plenty in Scotland. There is a conflict there. Can you see any resolution to that, except longer holidays?

Jackie Davidson: Yes, there could be one long trip to Glentress.

We raised for the mountain bike framework the issue of the urban setting and the facilities for mountain biking specifically. Among the legacy of 2014 will be one of the first urban mountain bike facilities and, we hope, a centre in Cathkin Braes.

What Rob Gibson described is definitely an issue and there is no getting away from the fact that there is a culture within cycling in which if someone goes track cycling, they bring everything with them in their car. Ian Aitken was talking about smarter choices, smarter places: a good example of working hand in hand is the project at the east end of Glasgow, which is examining the infrastructure around the east end to see whether it can help cyclists to get to the velodrome. In return, we will look at the locker spaces in the velodrome to see whether people can hire them for a year or a month so that they can keep their kit there.

We have explored some options but, at the moment, cyclists using cars to travel to participate in cycling is definitely an issue in the urban and central belt areas.

Rob Gibson: I have no doubt that we will pursue those matters as we continue with our inquiry.

The Convener: There are no more questions from members, so I thank the witnesses for the detailed written evidence that they provided—we are grateful for it. They will be aware that we intend to report in the new year after we have finished taking evidence, so I hope that the witnesses will get a chance to see the recommendations that we produce.

16:26

Meeting suspended.

16:27

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

Railway Closures (Exclusion) Scotland Order 2009 (SSI 2009/371)

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is consideration of subordinate legislation. The Subordinate Legislation Committee sought further clarification from the Scottish Government on the order but was content with the response. No motion to annul has been lodged. If members have no comments, are we agreed to make no recommendation on the order?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Petition

Rural Fuel Prices (PE1181)

16:28

The Convener: Item 4 is consideration of a petition. I draw members' attention to the paper that accompanies PE1181, which notes that the United Kingdom Government has stated clearly that it does not intend to pursue the reduction of fuel duty in remote and rural Scotland as called for by the petitioner, who asks us to urge the Scottish Government to make further representations to the UK Government. The Scottish Government has undertaken to continue to pursue the issue with the UK Government and we have been provided with the Scottish Government's response.

I welcome Alasdair Allan, who has joined us for this item.

Do members have any comments on the petition?

Rob Gibson: The committee needs to take forward the issue in some way, because the evidence from throughout Europe shows that we have the highest tax and one of the lowest before-tax costs for diesel, for example. We must find a way of investigating how it might be possible to put people in Scotland at less of a disadvantage. However, I would rather hear what other members have to say first because fuel prices are a huge problem in the area that I represent.

16:30

Cathy Peattie: I understand that the issue of fuel prices is a huge problem for people in the area that Rob Gibson represents, as it is for people in other areas and for various industries. However, what the petition calls for is not something that the Scottish Parliament can do. The petition has been considered and we have asked the Scottish Government to do something, perhaps through lobbying, but we have no power to insist that the UK Government does anything about the issue. I appreciate where people are coming from, but I cannot see what else we can do with the petition.

The Convener: As Cathy Peattie said, there are limits to what the Scottish Parliament or the Scottish Government can do, however much we might want to take a view that is different from that of the UK Government.

It seems to me that there are three aspects on which we could write to the Scottish Government. First, we could simply restate our expectation that the Government will continue to raise the issue with the UK Government, including with ministers who are subsequently appointed as a result of a general election or the ministerial changeovers that happen from time to time. A new perspective in the UK Government might make it open to looking again at the issue.

We could also ask the Scottish Government to consider a couple of matters that are within its remit, which could reduce the burden. The second aspect about which we could write to the Government is how we support demand reduction in relation to heating or fuel for diesel generators—many remote communities still use diesel generators. If there were more support for demand reduction for heating and electric power in homes and businesses, costs could be reduced.

The third aspect is the cost of transportation of fuel, which was noted as a secondary cause of increased prices. People's reduced negotiating power when they buy in smaller volumes could be considered by the Scottish Government, which might facilitate co-operatives, or co-operation on a larger scale, to enable remote areas to pool and increase their negotiating and buying power. There is action that the Scottish Government can take in its devolved remit to start to reduce additional financial burdens.

Alison McInnes: I am interested in what you said and I support your suggestions. There is no doubt that in rural Scotland the cost of fuel is a significant issue. I have long supported calls for a derogation of the sort that is proposed in the petition. However, I accept that on the whole the matter is reserved, as Cathy Peattie said. The committee should focus on recommending action that the Government in Scotland could take to make a difference. I have no problem with asking the Government to continue to make representations to the UK Government, but we cannot pursue that angle much longer.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): Convener, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. The petitioners would have attended the meeting but it was too expensive for them to come. They have indicated that they are happy for me to say something.

The petitioners have made it clear that they appreciate that tax is a reserved matter. If the committee is to do anything, they would like it to acknowledge the problems that are faced by people in remote places such as Scotland's island communities and to align itself with the view that the UK Government should do something about that.

Tax is an important factor. I filled up my tank yesterday in Harris at a cost of £1.19 per litre—that was at one of the cheaper places; in parts of Uist the cost was £1.22 or £1.23, compared with £1.08 on the mainland. It is clear that tax is part of

the issue. However, as the convener said, another part of the issue concerns suppliers. When a company that supplies fuel to Lewis was threatened with competition, the threat brought down the price of petrol by several pence in one day. However, that has not happened in other islands, where a monopoly still applies. It is interesting that the company to which I refer was not able to provide representatives to speak to the Scottish Government about the matter.

The issue has very human consequences. People have told me at my surgeries that they are caught in a benefits trap because they cannot afford to drive to work. Whether or not the matter is reserved, I think that the petitioners are keen for the committee to acknowledge that there is an issue and to state its view.

The Convener: Do you want to come back in, Rob?

Rob Gibson: I do indeed.

On the question of volumes, which the convener raised, I think that the petition raises certain issues that we could investigate or which the Government could be asked to look into. Diesel for fishing boats has been dispensed by Highland Council at its Lochinver office, and the bulk buying of that fuel, which I suppose was meant to ensure that the west coast ports were used, was a way of keeping down costs. Why could that model of local authorities acting, if you will, as wholesalers not be applied in other areas? Obviously, questions about storage would arise, but I think that we should take a very serious look at bulk supplies. After all, if it is proving difficult to have competition in certain places, having bulk storage would at least be a way of cutting initial costs, but we need to know whether such a move would be possible within the law. In any case, I do not see why we should not ask the question now.

The Convener: First, do members agree to write as a matter of courtesy to the petitioner with the correspondence that has been received to date?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: I suggest that we write again to the Scottish Government. I think that it is fair enough to express our grave concern at the on-going situation and one particular company's apparent inability to make available representatives even to discuss the matter. We should also reiterate our expectation that the Government will continue to raise the matter with the UK Government and ask what has been done to explore options that might exist under devolved powers to reduce demand for fuel for electricity and heating in domestic and business premises or to find renewable transport options through biofuels, electric vehicles and so on. Obviously, that latter option will not apply to fishing boats, but many other businesses might be able to cut their costs with such an approach. We should also ask about opportunities for increasing negotiating power through local authorities, co-operatives or some other vehicle. Is that a reasonable course of action?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: Do you have anything to add, Alasdair?

Alasdair Allan: Perhaps a bigger issue than the inability to deal with large volumes is the unavailability of competition in some places. However, I want to put on record that tax is definitely a factor. The situation is having very human consequences in areas that do not have any viable public transport alternatives. As much as I support such alternatives, the fact is that they are simply not there.

The Convener: Indeed.

In agreeing to write to the Scottish Government on the basis that I have outlined, do members also agree to close the petition?

Rob Gibson: I do not think that we should. If we are seeking answers from the Government, we should bring its responses back to the committee for further discussion. I do not think that the issues raised in the petition have been answered. It is certainly not dead; in fact, the proposals that you have outlined open up a whole new area that needs to be developed.

Marlyn Glen: I have no problem with keeping the petition open but, as an ex-member of the Public Petitions Committee, I have to say that I have a problem with raising expectations that we cannot meet. I take Rob Gibson's point and acknowledge the difficulties of this situation; however, the tax issue that Alasdair Allan has highlighted does not fall within the committee's remit and it does not help anyone to suggest that we go down that road. I am always a bit concerned for petitioners whose petitions are kept open when it looks like there might be no solution to them.

As I said, I am not saying that we should definitely close our consideration of this petition. I suggest that we keep it open but tell the petitioners that we do not wish to raise any false expectations that anything will happen quickly.

The Convener: I thank Marlyn Glen for that comment. Although the petitioners have not been able to make it to this meeting, I am sure that they are watching us or will read the *Official Report*.

Alasdair Allan: They are definitely watching us.

The Convener: It is also probably fair to assume that they are well aware that the tax

system is reserved and that, even if the will was there, there are limits to what the Parliament or the Scottish Government can do about such issues.

Given that we are writing again to the Scottish Government, it would be reasonable to consider the reply on the agenda as part of our consideration of the petition. We should therefore keep the petition open until we have received the Government's response but I must point out that, at that stage, we will have to recognise that we cannot do anything else about the tax issue and that we should expect to close the petition. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement*.

Active Travel Inquiry (Witness Expenses)

16:40

The Convener: Under item 5, does the committee agree to delegate to me responsibility for arranging for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to pay, under rule 12.4.3 of standing orders, witnesses' expenses in our active travel inquiry?

Members *indicated agreement*.

Meeting closed at 16:41.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

Members who wish to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the report and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Thursday 3 December 2009

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00
Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75
Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

And through other good booksellers

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders, Subscriptions and standing orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.co.uk

For more information on the Parliament, or if you have an inquiry about information in languages other than English or in alternative formats (for example, Braille; large print or audio), please contact:

Public Information Service
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Fòn: 0131 348 5395 (Gàidhlig)
Textphone users may contact us on **0800 092 7100**
We also welcome calls using the RNID Typetalk service.
Fax: 0131 348 5601
E-mail: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

We welcome written correspondence in any language.