

# **TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 12 January 2010

Session 3

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## TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2010, 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 GAVE EVIDENCE:

Stuart Knowles (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)  
Alex Macaulay (South East of Scotland Transport Partnership)  
Dr John Parkin (University of Bolton)  
Frank Roach (Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership)

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Clare O'Neill

### LOCATION

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 12 January 2010

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 14:00]

#### Active Travel Inquiry

**The Convener (Patrick Harvie):** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the first meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I wish you all a very happy new year and hope that you had an enjoyable break.

There is just one item on our agenda today, which is the continuation of our active travel inquiry. This is the fourth of our evidence sessions, and there are two witness panels. First, we have, in splendid isolation, a panel of one: Dr John Parkin, from the University of Bolton. We will then hear from three of the regional transport partnerships. We have a large number of questions to get through, so I ask everyone to bear that in mind when asking and answering questions. I record apologies from Shirley-Anne Somerville.

I welcome Dr John Parkin, who is reader in transport engineering and planning at the University of Bolton. I thank you for your written statement to the committee, which has been circulated to members. Would you like to make brief opening remarks before we begin the questioning?

**Dr John Parkin (University of Bolton):** I will introduce myself and give my background, as it might help the committee to understand where my written evidence comes from. I am a chartered civil engineer, and I worked for consulting engineers before moving into academia in 1998. I now teach transport engineering and planning, and a lot of the work that I do is connected with cycling.

**The Convener:** Thank you. In previous evidence sessions, we have discussed whether the fear of real or perceived risk—from fast-moving traffic, for example—is a barrier to people cycling. What are your views on the balance between real and perceived risk? What practical measures can be taken to combat those concerns?

**Dr Parkin:** There is some real risk. There is certainly an awful lot of risk in what we do in the modern world and in our use of transport. We cannot get away from that. However, there are

perceptions about the risks that are involved in cycling that are different from the real risks. It is probably true to say—as I did in my written evidence and as John Adams, who has done a lot of work on risk in transport, notes—that there is no absolute way of measuring risk, because as soon as some action is taken to overcome risk, the parameters are shifted. The analogy that John Adams used was Heisenberg's uncertainty principle; you cannot pin the risk down.

In that context, we can begin to think about and interpret how people think about risk in relation to cycling. Many people self-justify and say that they would not cycle for the first reason that comes into their head: that it is unsafe. That is a very unchallengeable statement for someone to make as a reason why they might not cycle. We have to go a little deeper and attempt to unpick it. There is research evidence—in some of the work that I have done, as well as in that of others—that suggests that people's willingness to take risks is perhaps different from what may be gleaned from that first statement about perceived risk. Some of my work involved showing people a variety of routes and links on video; the results suggested that 72 per cent of those fell below the level at which people would be willing to take the risk. In other words, the majority of the routes were safe enough for people to take the risk. Interestingly, that mirrors some of the analysis in the cycling action plan for Scotland. The figures that relate to the way in which risk is reported show that it is less of a factor than one might first believe.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I am interested in the issue of risk. There is general agreement that we must start to encourage young people to cycle when they are children. When I think of the roads that children have to travel on here, it seems to me that the risk to them is greater. I am interested in how you would approach that problem. Some of us have been to Copenhagen, where we looked at the work that is done in kindergarten to help youngsters to learn to cycle. Those children cycle on safe cycle paths, but I would not be happy for my children to cycle on some of the roads here in Edinburgh, for instance.

**Dr Parkin:** There are three components to that. The first, which is very important, is cycle training for both adults and children. Some level of cycle training is offered in the United Kingdom, and that is the case in northern European countries as well. That can increase the ability of children and adults to understand what is going on and handle that. I am no expert on the psychological side, hence my statement at the beginning about being a civil engineer. Nevertheless, I suggest that there are certain ages at which children's ability to perceive speed and distance leaps enormously and we must understand that, below the age of around 12,

their ability to comprehend what is going on in a complex environment is not the same as that of adults.

Secondly, particularly around schools, where there are concentrated volumes of younger cyclists, we must be even more careful about the provision of infrastructure, especially in the last few hundred yards before the school gate.

Thirdly, there is the relationship with other road users—the motor vehicle drivers. The evidence in the papers and lots of other evidence suggests, in different ways, that the more cycle traffic there is, the more the motor driver responds in a positive way to cycle traffic.

There are issues and there must be a fairly comprehensive way of tackling them in a number of domains, not the least of which is training.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Have you done any work on gender differences in the perception of risk?

**Dr Parkin:** I am struggling to remember whether I did any work on that in my own research. I do not think that there was a significant difference between males and females, although it is clear that more females begin to ride bicycles when there are more cycle riders in total. For example, there are now many more cyclists in London and the proportion who are female is much higher. I caricatured it once by saying that women are a bit more sensible and understand when the risk is just coming down a bit from the larger numbers. They start partaking at that appropriate level.

**Marlyn Glen:** When the critical mass is achieved. If we are trying to increase the number of cyclists, it is important that we increase the number of women who are cycling and the number of mothers who are willing to encourage their children to cycle.

**Dr Parkin:** I am not a social scientist, but I would say that you are touching on a wider group of cultures, in the broadest sense, surrounding cycling. We are talking not just about sports cyclists and fast male commuters, but about women with children and so forth. Getting a much greater diversity of people cycling enriches the numbers, as it were, which then has an effect on perceptions, safety and so on.

**The Convener:** Let us move on to the various soft measures that have been suggested to us by witnesses, such as individual travel planning. How effective are those measures? Which options provide the best value for money and which are most effective at changing behaviour and increasing the uptake of active travel?

**Dr Parkin:** Much of that is still an open question. The fact that cycling levels are higher in northern Europe is often linked to the culture there. If we

delve back into history, we find all sorts of interesting reasons for that. However, frequently so-called smarter choices are focused on what we might call logistical and technical information and advice. Arguably, those are quite blunt instruments for attempting to change hearts and minds and behaviour. That is all that I want to say. I do not want to suggest that individualised travel planning and marketing are marginally better than interventions at the workplace or the school. I strongly suspect that different things will have different impacts at different times in different locations, so there is probably no precise answer. It is a fairly open question.

**The Convener:** You referred to cultures in which there is much higher uptake of active travel. Some witnesses have given us the impression that, in some other European countries, a clear sense of leadership has been given over the course of years or decades and has created a transformational change in travel behaviour. From where would such leadership come in Scotland? Some witnesses to whom that question has been put have said that it should come from everyone. Should it come from everyone, or is there a place in which it properly resides and from which it should come?

**Dr Parkin:** That is an interesting question. This morning, I jotted down some notes. I will start with the issue of political leadership. The question is whether politicians lead the electorate or the electorate leads politicians. That is an interesting dynamic. I am not a political scientist, but political leadership is certainly required on policies and finances. The other clever thing that politicians can do is use others who are in the frame as their agents in this regard. For example, the cycling action plan for Scotland mentions Sir Chris Hoy. It is right to do so, as that will appeal to some sections of the population. There is also great potential for using third sector partnerships, which are mentioned in the action plan. I am not being pejorative about local authorities' abilities, but they are probably not as good as community-based charities or organisations at delivering certain things in the community. It is clever for politicians to help to develop a culture through the use of proxies and others who can influence people in communities.

Clear political leadership can also be provided by focusing strongly on quality of design—this building is a fine example of that—and quality of life. Politicians can make aspirational statements on those issues in relation to cycling.

I will stick with politicians for a moment. This may sound a bit rude, given the title of the inquiry, but we should call a spade a spade. We are talking about cycling and walking—what does “active travel” mean? Someone in London who is

cycling in a flowing skirt will not say to her mate, “I am getting to work by active travel this morning”—she will say that she is getting in on her bike. We should not be afraid to call things by their name. I was at a meeting of academics last week in Plymouth at which exactly that happened. I got a bit frustrated at that as well.

14:15

The other area to consider, in which political leadership could be needed, is the difficult one of liability. It is clearly a difficult area, because it directly takes on the motoring lobby. Again, the cycling action plan for Scotland mentioned it. We should not underestimate the significant psychological difference in the approach of drivers in northern Europe to using the highway network that is caused by the fact that, if they hit somebody, they are responsible until it is proved otherwise. The London Government half-ried to pick up that issue a few years ago, but dropped it very quickly. However, it should perhaps be pursued again in some way.

The final issue—sorry, I hope that I am not talking in too rambling a way—is that it is clear that the maintenance of high levels of cycling in Denmark and the Netherlands is a result of very strong national policy, which then filtered down to local authorities through funding, direction and so on and so forth. There is a place for political leadership, and there is probably leadership in other ways as well.

**The Convener:** You said that third parties might be used to provide leadership in advocating ideas or options to the public. Does it not need to work in the other direction? You mentioned the motoring lobby, and it is very clear that drivers and, in fact, the car industry have a range of substantial and powerful voices that impact on politicians and their choices. Very few organisations can speak with that kind of clout on behalf of the much larger group of people who walk and those who cycle as well. Where does the voice need to come from that will impact on politicians to give some additional clout to that interest group?

**Dr Parkin:** As you can probably guess, I have close associations with a number of the bodies concerned, including Sustrans and the Cyclists Touring Club. Indeed, British Cycling is increasingly important in promoting grass-roots cycling. It is interesting that there are more cycling organisations per head of the cycling population than there are motoring organisations per head of the motoring population. We all know that we go either to the Automobile Association or to the RAC for the motoring voices. Maybe it is gamekeeper turned poacher, or the other way round—I am not quite sure—but the AA has certainly been interested in the past in defining a group of people

as cycling motorists. It stands to reason that the majority of adults who cycle also drive.

Perhaps some of the movement needs to come from a closer bringing together of some of the disparate organisations that represent walking, the motorists’ lobby and the cycling lobby. I am not sure that I have precisely answered your question, but I think that, as we continue to plug away at cycling, the leadership will more clearly emerge as the membership bodies grow. Certainly the CTC has grown enormously as a membership body in the past five years or so.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Clearly, therefore, you would not call a Scotland-wide national active travel plan by that name; you suggest that it should be a Scotland-wide walking and cycling plan. What are your views about having such a travel plan?

**Dr Parkin:** I have in my bag a copy of the regional spatial strategy for the north-west of England. I am quite convinced that at that level—whether national or regional—the local-level issues of short trips, walking and cycling can get lost. I have already said that a national walking and cycling strategy is demanded. That has happened in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. The key will be for the direction to be set in a clear and robust but relatively light way at the national level, with the imperative being on ensuring that funding flows to the local authorities only when they can demonstrate clear local policies that support the national direction.

**Rob Gibson:** That is an interesting political perspective in a Scotland that is discussing issues such as ring fencing.

The cycling action plan for Scotland, which you have mentioned, suggests that 10 per cent of all journeys should be made by bike by 2020. Is that realistic, given that, as someone who has visited Denmark, I realise that the Danes have been developing cycling policies for 70 years?

**Dr Parkin:** It depends on your philosophy of target setting. I would not have a difficulty with that target. Some would say that it is entirely aspirational and unachievable; others might say that it is firm, challenging and something to aim for. I would not have a difficulty with it. We will find out whether it is met only in 2020.

Target setting is fraught with difficulty. I have done models—in England and Wales rather than Scotland, unfortunately—that have looked at the variation in cycle use at local level, and it is clear that when national targets were set for increasing cycle use in England, due regard was not paid to the high levels of cycling in, for example, Cambridge, Oxford and York. It would be extremely difficult to double and double again cycling in such places. Again, we are talking about

the relationship between the national and the local. Although it is possible to have such a high-level national target, a strong steer ought to be given to local authorities to set their own realistic targets, which could then be analysed and compared with the national target, and horse trading or whatever could take place.

**Rob Gibson:** I heard your remarks about community-based organisations being given the lead. We have only 32 local authorities in Scotland, some of which are huge—my local authority area is the size of Belgium. The clout of such bodies must be delivered by the people on the ground. Do we need to focus on the levels of financial investment that will require to be made in the cycling infrastructure and other measures to achieve the Government's target of a 10 per cent modal share for cycling in Scotland by 2020, or should we focus on an attitude change, which seems to me to be part of the evidence that is coming through?

**Dr Parkin:** I want to pick up on the role of local authorities. There is now leadership—not political leadership, but local leadership—among local authority officers and local politicians. At that local or sub-national level—to broaden the discussion out from local authorities—there could be merit in, for example, having separate targets for access to rail by bicycle. In Denmark, 40 per cent of access trips to rail are made by bicycle. The bicycle is a key feeder mode to rail. There could certainly be a focus on separate targets for access to schools. Businesses—particularly tourism businesses and large employers—could be targeted from a travel planning perspective. It is a question of working with people at the local level in a variety of ways.

Coming back to local authorities, I suspect that there is a strong need for a significant culture change among my own kind—engineers in local authorities, that is—and for education and training in walking and cycling. After all, it has to be said that some current urban design concepts are not at the forefront of the minds of some of the more mature engineers.

**Rob Gibson:** And such changes in attitude will be almost as important as anything else in achieving a 10 per cent modal share by 2020.

**Dr Parkin:** Yes.

**Rob Gibson:** The committee members who went to Copenhagen heard that, between 2009 and 2014, the Danish Government will invest 1 billion Danish kroner or £120 million in supporting up to 50 per cent of the cost of bicycle improvement schemes, leading to a possible total investment in cycling of 2 billion kroner or £240 million over the next five years. Given that Denmark's population is equivalent to Scotland's, would such a funding model—if you know anything

of its detail—be appropriate for Scotland? How could we encourage an equivalent scale of investment?

**Dr Parkin:** You have given me some headline figures and equated the population of both countries, but I have to say that I am struggling with the maths. Perhaps I should bring things down to amounts per head and nearer to figures that I am familiar with. In England, for example, the investment per head in cycling has been 30p to 50p per annum; for the past three or four years, Cycling England's investment in its six demonstration towns has been about £10 to £12 per head, which has increased the level of cycling in those towns by 27 per cent. Increasing investment in cycling is certainly worth while.

However, the issue is not just the level of investment but what the money is spent on. I will not name any names, but I was once consulted on a proposal for a cycling scheme. The local authority in question decided to put a pelican crossing in one place and something else somewhere else; it really wanted the crossing, as it was a nice easy way of eating up £20,000 of the budget. My point is that if the money is to be spent appropriately, we need creative design and thinking, which is also where training comes in.

**The Convener:** For a couple of years now, the committee has in its reports on the Scottish budget repeatedly and unanimously agreed recommendations calling for an increase in investment. I agree that how the money is spent and other issues that affect public attitudes are at least as important as the availability of the money in the first place, but do you agree that a 10-year aspiration to achieve a 10 per cent modal share is unlikely to be met unless we can persuade the Government to increase investment in this area?

**Dr Parkin:** Yes—and given my earlier comments about my ability to analyse the financial aspects, I point out that that is a very general yes.

**Cathy Peattie:** In your written evidence, you outline the importance of whole network planning in the development of cycling infrastructure. Why does that not happen at UK level? What needs to change to make it happen?

**Dr Parkin:** Thank you for asking that question—I am now on home territory. You have raised an issue that I very much wanted to emphasise in my evidence, although I have to say that, when I wrote my submission, I was expecting to be accompanied by Professor Tom Rye and Erl Wilkie, who would have filled in some of the other pieces.

Having written about the issue in one way in the submission, I want to come at it from the other direction. In transport we frequently refer to hierarchies; for example, we talk about reducing



volume, then reducing speed and so on and so forth. However, that is a gross misrepresentation of what we should be doing.

14:30

Traditionally in transport engineering and planning, I teach that we need to understand the generation—the origins and destinations—of travel and understand the routes available and then design according to the routes to satisfy the demand. I cannot see why we do not do the same in cycle planning and engineering. Certainly, such an approach is taken in some Dutch and German guidance. That kind of approach is all about analysing the land uses, understanding where the significant origins and destinations are, understanding the desire lines and working out where the barriers to those are and then thinking through how we overcome those barriers by using all the means that are at our disposal, including the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and the various other pieces of legislation that can allow us to do that.

At that individual level—this comes back to the issue of quality—we also need to think about the speed standard that we need to adopt for cycle routes and what surfacing and lighting those routes require. As happens with the highway network, the speed standard would define for us curve radii, stopping sight distances and so on. In other words, given that cycling is a mode based on a vehicle—the bicycle is a vehicle in law—that is capable of speed, we need to place on to that mode all of the appropriate panoply of transport engineering and planning that we have historically placed on motor vehicles and public transport.

**Cathy Peattie:** You have answered two of my questions at once. I am interested in your response, which makes a lot of sense to me. How do we convince people that that is a good way forward? In your earlier comments about training, I picked up the point that training is needed not just for cyclists but for planners. Politicians also need to be trained on how to make the decisions and on how important such decisions are. How do politicians and planners get that kind of information over to people? How do we get people to sign up to ensure that we can make the kind of things that Rob Gibson talked about happen?

**Dr Parkin:** The flippant response is that they should be sent to me at the University of Bolton.

I do an awful lot of cycle training. I wrote Lancashire County Council's cycling design guidance and based some of it on the Scottish guidance, which places the right emphasis on speed standards, geometry and so forth. I have also done quite a bit of training for engineers and planners who already work in the industry.

Transport for London has written its own "London Cycling Design Standards", on which I and three or four others have delivered a rolling programme of training over about five years. However, the "London Cycling Design Standards" are based on the London cycle network, which is a predefined network. In some senses, those design standards presuppose such a network and come in only at a certain stage of the process to which I have referred.

Many people in the transport industry may have no particular knowledge in cycling and walking, which I believe is a specialism. Cycling and walking is a particularly interesting and challenging area because it is so betwixt and between—many people do not realise its difficulties and nuances. I suggest that training is needed for local authority engineers and consultants.

**Cathy Peattie:** Perhaps we need to make such training compulsory.

Your written submission outlines the principles of a "permeable cycle network". Can you provide more information on such networks and outline why those have not been developed in the UK? What needs to be done to encourage their development?

**Dr Parkin:** I hope that we are on a cusp. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, we did what we thought was the right thing at the time in developing for urban areas traffic management schemes that created ring roads, one-way streets, diversions, routes into car parks and so on. In other words, we engineered—if I may use that word—our urban areas to accommodate motor traffic. I suggest that, at the same time, we marginalised walking and ignored cycling.

There is an opportunity to use the powers that we already have through traffic regulation orders to begin to allow one-way streets to be two-way streets for cycle traffic, to use exemptions from banned turns, and to open up to cycle traffic some streets that have, for good traffic management reasons, been blocked off to motor traffic. Such things are beginning to happen in London. The more we do them, the more we build in the advantage of greater directness for cycle traffic compared with motor traffic. In mentioning quite a few things that are going on, I note that we are just waking up to the matter. I hope that we are on a cusp.

**Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** In your written evidence, you state:

"The Scottish Parliament should prioritise work with the railway industry to address the needs of cycle parking and access at railway stations."

What key priorities should be pursued with ScotRail or Network Rail?

**Dr Parkin:** I have already said that cycle access to railway stations is important in the Netherlands, Denmark and some parts of northern Germany. Clearly, cycle parking at railway stations is important. Along with that, a key issue is management of parking. We often think about putting in Sheffield stands and boxes and making sure that cycles are covered, but then we forget the problem. Evidence at stations from which people access London, such as Woking, and from other stations, such as Cambridge, shows that at stations where there is a high demand, active management of parking is needed. Stations inevitably get a lot of derelict and redundant bikes, and there has been an increase in the proportion of people who leave their bicycles overnight at the central station and then use it to get to their ultimate destination. That happens quite a lot in the Netherlands and there is significant evidence of it at a lot of London termini and, for example, at Bristol station. Parking is certainly a key priority—management of parking is required.

The other point that I hint at in my submission is that we need to ensure that we make the environment open and welcoming for cycle traffic from the edge of the public highway, across the station forecourt, through the envelope of the building, and through the station itself to wherever the parking may be. Those access routes from the cycle routes or highways to the parking are also important.

**Charlie Gordon:** Your written evidence also highlights the success of Cycling England and the major projects that it has managed, such as the cycling demonstration towns and the bikeability scheme. What are the key factors in the success of those initiatives?

**Dr Parkin:** Let me make an apology. When I reread my answer to question 6, it seemed to tail away. I should have written about things other than Cycling England in the answer. However, the six cycling demonstration towns are interesting and varied. Derby, Darlington and Exeter have focused on schools and schoolchildren. Some, in particular Lancaster, have focused on culture and some have focused on developing an urban core that is friendly to cycling. Each of the six has approached the project in a different way.

Overall, I can do no more than what Cycling England has done and suggest that, as I note in my penultimate paragraph, consistent local political leadership is required and it must work hand in glove with senior officers. We also need sustained investment in infrastructure—in the planning network context that I have already described—and work must be done on the culture. As I said earlier, it is an open question and it is a difficult one to answer.

In some areas, the answer has been all about festivals, cycling film shows and so on to raise the profile of cycling, but the level of return on the investment in such events is most difficult to quantify. The network and infrastructure must be in place, but cultural and behavioural change must be linked to it.

**Charlie Gordon:** The average increase in cycling levels in the six demonstration towns since 2005 is 27 per cent. What was the range of modal shift?

**Dr Parkin:** The increase ranged from around 3 or 4 per cent, at the lower end, to somewhere between 30 and 35 per cent.

**Charlie Gordon:** Can you make the breakdown of that available to the committee?

**Dr Parkin:** Yes. I should not really have answered the question, as I was talking off the top of my head.

**The Convener:** I have just been reminded that we hope to hear from Cycling England later in the inquiry. Hopefully, we will be able to explore the issue in more detail with future witnesses.

**Dr Parkin:** May I leave that unanswered question to them?

**The Convener:** That is fine.

**Marlyn Glen:** I warn you first that my questions were originally for Erl Wilkie, but you have touched on some of them already, so I will give you a chance to add to your comments. Why does cycling play such a minor role in the plans, especially the investment plans, of Scotland's local authorities, regional transport partnerships and national Government? How might that be changed?

**Dr Parkin:** It is a chicken-and-egg situation. It comes back to whether politicians are leaders or followers. Good local authorities will have clear-thinking politicians who can see a future direction, coupled with good senior officers who have vision, who understand the issues and who see that investment will lead to changes in how transport is used. All too frequently—it is just human nature—we carry on as we are. Some of the measures that I am suggesting on network planning, hierarchy of provision and so on are a little more radical, in a quiet way. If local authorities are able to make a shift in some of their thinking, they may be able to see the future more clearly. I am not sure that I can answer the question, but I can see that there can be movement where there is good leadership. Where there is not, there is often no movement.

**Marlyn Glen:** I go back to the difficult issue of creating a cycling culture. Scotland currently lacks the cycling culture that is found in countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands. What actions

can Governments take to assist in the creation of such a culture? You have spoken about the change that is needed for planners and engineers.

**Dr Parkin:** I may be beginning to repeat myself. At the beginning of the meeting, I spoke about national policy feeding through into direction of local authority finance. Clear policy direction at national level will assist local authorities in the work that they do at local level.

**Marlyn Glen:** You have already touched on that issue. As you heard, some committee members recently met Copenhagen city council to discuss its experience of promoting active travel. Members were told that, before redesigning roads to make them more cycle friendly, the council often lays out proposed changes on a temporary basis in order to gauge public opinion. Its experience has been that trials are usually well received and often result in permanent changes along the lines that have been suggested. What do you think about that model of trial road layouts? Could it be adopted in the United Kingdom?

**Dr Parkin:** Yes—that model is a good way forward. Unless somebody who is more knowledgeable about local Scottish law contradicts me, I will say that the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 allows for experimental traffic regulation orders, which can be introduced without the need for consultation and can allow exactly what Marlyn Glen suggests. Originally, they were to allow trials of traffic calming measures, for example.

There is good reason to do what Marlyn Glen suggests. Somebody might ask why such orders are more necessary for cycling-related and traffic calming measures. They are more necessary because the highway users to whom they relate interact at a much more human level—at eye-contact level and at lower speed—so the infrastructure is important but needs to be changed in subtle and marginal ways. Therefore, the experimental approach is a good way forward.

**The Convener:** There are no further questions. I thank you very much for the time that you have spent with us answering questions, as well as for your written evidence.

We will suspend briefly for the changeover of witnesses.

14:46

*Meeting suspended.*

14:48

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** We continue item 1 on the agenda—our inquiry into active travel—and I

welcome our second panel of witnesses. We are joined by Stuart Knowles of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland, who is also the senior manager of traffic and transportation services at Fife Council; by Frank Roach, who is partnership director at Highlands and Islands transport partnership; and by Alex Macaulay, who is partnership director at south east of Scotland transport partnership.

I thank the witnesses for joining us and I thank those who have provided written evidence. No one will make opening remarks, so I will kick off with a question about the stated intentions that have existed for many years. The aspiration of increasing the modal shares of walking and cycling has been in documents, strategies, plans and programmes for national, regional and local government and agencies for a long time. Why has the increase in active travel for which people have argued not taken place?

**Stuart Knowles (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland):** I will kick off. Where we have invested in high-quality segregated cycling facilities, we do annual monitoring. We are getting a 25 per cent increase in cycling and walking annually. There is an issue about providing the quality of infrastructure that people require to get them back to cycling, but there is definitely a desire for people to get back to cycling and walking.

**Alex Macaulay (South East of Scotland Transport Partnership):** I will return to my favourite subject: money. In my written submission, I said that it can be demonstrated that active travel can produce not only major transport benefits but health benefits and wider social benefits. The capital cost of providing for good-quality active travel is relatively modest compared to other major transport investment. That is where the problem lies—we are too timid about investing seriously in, to quote a phrase, the smarter choices, smarter places agenda. If collectively we put more money into that agenda we would, as a country, start to see the benefits.

I turn to the other major issue, which is coming through gradually. I equate the active travel and smarter choices, smarter places agenda with where we were 30 years ago with drink-driving. At that time, it was socially acceptable to drink and drive. Now, you are a pariah if you do so. That is a direct result of effective high-profile publicity and education campaigns throughout the country. We have not seen such a high level of publicity and education in support of active travel and other smarter choices, smarter places initiatives, but it would make a major difference. It would not change things overnight, as we all know, but it would gradually bring about changes in attitude

and much more willingness to shift to more active travel choices.

**Frank Roach (Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership):** I agree with what Alex Macaulay said about resources, given that only about 1 per cent of transport money goes to cycling while we are hoping for a 10 per cent modal shift to cycling by 2020—which is quite a tall order. There is a hearts and minds battle to be had, which is not as expensive as putting in infrastructure. We already have pretty significant statistics, even across the Highlands. The most recent census showed that in Kyle of Lochalsh 35 per cent of people walk to work. In Keith, 50 per cent of journeys are taken by an active travel method. Elgin is another good example, as walking and cycling levels there are well above the Scottish average. It is not just an urban thing; there are examples of good practice from further afield. It would be interesting to see what outputs the smarter choices, smarter places programme reveals when it has run its course.

**The Convener:** We have had it put to us that the development of a successful walking and cycling culture requires strong political leadership as well as resources. To what extent does such leadership exist in Scotland at local, national and regional levels? If such leadership requires further development, where should it come from?

**Stuart Knowles:** One of the problems with political leadership is in looking at where we are rather than at where we want to be. The northern European nations across the North Sea have had political leadership in that respect ever since the mid-1970s when there was the first oil crisis—they decided to invest in active travel at that point. Then, Britain had a higher modal split for walking and cycling than those nations, but they saw that oil was not going to last forever so they did something about it. They have been investing in active travel for the past 30 years and their modal split targets are well above the level that we have set in Scotland, which shows that political leadership on the bigger picture is possible.

In the past it has, with some exceptions, certainly been difficult to get a level of commitment to active travel at local authority level, but I am sure that that will change, given issues to do with health, climate change targets and so on. There is an opportunity now. That might seem strange and you might ask how it can be, given the problem with the economic climate, but active travel is incredibly good value for money. About 50km of cycleway or walkway can be constructed for about the same price as 1km of road. A time when budgets are not as good as they have been presents an opportunity to move in a new direction, towards sustainable active travel.

**Alex Macaulay:** I reinforce that point—the committee heard me make exactly that point when I gave evidence on the draft budget. In times of financial restraint and constraint we should focus on areas in which there are demonstrably high cost benefit ratios, as there tend to be in the context of active travel.

I mentioned timidity and Frank Roach talked about work on smarter towns. It is eminently sensible to quantify what we can get out of investment through studies and so on. Even if we are a factor of 2 or 10 out in the cost benefit ratios in the statistics on active travel that are available throughout the UK, active travel is still good value for money. I am a simple soul in this regard: it seems to me to be a no-brainer that in times when money is tight we should put it where we will get a bigger bang for our buck. Our work on the regional transport strategy and our subsequent work has reinforced our understanding that active travel is good value for money.

I will not comment on where the political leadership will come from; I am in a politically restricted post. However, political leadership is needed from all parties. We need cross-party consensus if we are to make the shift.

**The Convener:** That brings me back to the first question that I put to this panel. If active travel is such a no-brainer, why has it not been happening for years?

**Alex Macaulay:** The only reason that I can suggest is timidity.

**Frank Roach:** Active travel needs a clearly identifiable champion. A number of bodies in Scotland have an overlap, but none appears to take the full lead. Cycling Scotland is currently consulting on its future; Scottish Cycling deals with the sports side of cycling; and Sustrans is involved and is given money by a number of local authorities and agencies. It would be better if Cycling Scotland were beefed up and in the heart of Government—whether as part of Transport Scotland or in the transport department—instead of having the Cinderella role that it currently has.

**The Convener:** What do you think about the provision of measures that other witnesses have talked about, such as personalised travel planning? From where should such soft measures be delivered? Should decisions be left to local authorities or RTPs, or should there be national programmes for delivery of some measures?

**Alex Macaulay:** I am sure that the committee is fully aware that central Government has been providing funding to RTPs for travel planning. That funding is due to dry up at the end of this financial year. In addition, separate ring-fenced funding has been associated with school-based travel planning, which has been a successful initiative. It

is a sad fact and an understandable result of the concordat that the removal of ring fencing of Government funding has meant that local authorities have applied their own priorities to funding. There is evidence of the impact of that on SEStran in relation to active travel. Funding that was ring fenced is now being applied to other local government priorities, which do not necessarily have anything to do with transport. If we are to make a serious impact, we need the political leadership to which you have referred. We need national leadership and we need to say nationally that it is a priority for us, the result of which would be some form of ring fencing of the funding.

15:00

I return to my earlier point. If we are to have a really effective national advertising and education campaign, it cannot be left to local and regional authorities: it must be led nationally, as transport safety campaigns have been. We need national leadership and, if we are to make a significant impact, we must shift funding nationally from other capital projects. I have made the point to the committee in previous evidence that we should shift money from what were perceived as capital projects into more revenue-based projects. A lot of the projects in active travel require on-going revenue investment rather than capital investment, and that has always been more difficult to get.

There needs to be a shift, and active travel must be set within the context of good travel planning, set within the context of an integrated approach. It cannot stand on its own; it must be integrated with other initiatives.

**Stuart Knowles:** Lynn Sloman has done work to evidence the fact that a balance needs to be achieved between softer measures, such as smarter choices and personalised travel planning, and investment in better infrastructure to get the best outcomes in terms of the modal split targets. She has shown that there are a lot of opportunities for people to partake in active travel for journeys that they make at the moment. Those are the people whom we can attract to active travel through the personalised travel planning and smarter choices programme. There are also people who want to make their journeys by active travel but do not have the opportunity because the facilities and the network infrastructure do not exist. We need a combination of those two things.

There are places in England—for example in some of the new towns, such as Milton Keynes—that have a completely segregated active travel network, but it has not been promoted or marketed and they have a poor modal split. On the continent, they have been very good at achieving both the softer measures and the harder measures to make the breakthrough.

There is a tipping point at which the number of people who partake in active travel starts to sell active travel. The people who are walking and cycling set an example and tell their friends about it, or people notice them doing it and try it themselves. It is important that we get into active travel over the next 10 years, so that people recognise that it is a way of getting about that we can build into our daily lives.

**Frank Roach:** There is nowhere easier to start than in schools. Time after time, kids are surveyed and a high proportion of them say that they would like to arrive at school either walking or cycling although, for various reasons, they do not. We have evidence from a number of towns where small investments in school travel co-ordinators to promote soft measures can produce remarkable results. The kids then walk or use bicycles for the rest of their lives instead of going from being driven everywhere to wanting to drive themselves everywhere.

**Cathy Peattie:** I want to return to risk and kids' safety. It is important that children and young mums cycle to school, but I am not sure that I would like my children or grandkids cycling on the roads just now. Although it is important to encourage children to cycle—Frank Roach has talked about the importance of young people and children cycling—safety is an issue. Would you like to comment on that?

**Frank Roach:** There is no doubt that the more people cycle, the safer it is, as Stuart Knowles said. For example, tremendous growth in cycling rates in London has not been matched by growth in the number of fatalities. Britain has more fatalities than some other places do, but I remind people that, even if we go back to the 1930s, very high numbers of cyclists were killed on the roads—the number was in four figures rather than the three figures now. Cycling is becoming safer. Often, the health dangers of not cycling are greater than the dangers of cycling.

**Rob Gibson:** Good afternoon, all. We have talked about the provision of different elements in producing a plan. Cycling organisations feel that facilities are often provided in isolation—we have mentioned that a bit already. Will you explain why that happens and outline what needs to be done to take a whole-network approach when planning cycling infrastructure?

**Alex Macaulay:** The issue is linked with Cathy Peattie's earlier point. If the network is incomplete—if it has breaks and discontinuities in safety and security—there is no doubt that that discourages people from using bicycles. That does not apply to walking to the same extent. Many rural roads do not have adjacent footways, but walking is pretty well catered for in urban areas as a form of active travel. I choose to walk rather than

cycle 5 miles a day to the office, because I feel much safer walking on a footpath than I would feel cycling in traffic. Safety is a factor.

There is no doubt that we need to plan comprehensive networks. One initiative on which SEStran has just completed work and reported to the board is the development of urban cycle networks for major urban parts of SEStran's area. One encouraging aspect of completing those networks is that the capital cost is relatively modest. We are now entering into discussions with our partner authorities to deliver those networks by plugging the gaps and discontinuities.

Major strides towards a national cycle network have been made through Sustrans, but how many cyclists cycle 50 miles? Not very many. The statistics show clearly that in urban and rural settings the vast majority of cycling trips and the propensity to cycle relate to shorter distance travel. The key is establishing comprehensive networks that serve as much of the catchment area as possible, with as few discontinuities as can be achieved. Networks need to be comprehensive. It is easy for people to say, "I don't want to cycle, because I've got to come out on to that busy road." It does not take much to discourage people from cycling. The way to encourage them is to have as comprehensive a network as can be achieved.

**Stuart Knowles:** I will comment on facilities. The network prioritises motorised vehicles. We have unclassified roads in residential and rural areas where the speed limits for all vehicles are similar. Given that the tarmac is laid on the networks in towns and rural areas, it would be easy to designate in those networks routes for active travel modes and routes for motorised modes. In most council areas, main roads and minor roads follow parallel routes. There is no reason why we could not create corridors for active travel in urban and rural situations. We in Scotland have done that to a large extent with the money for the cycling, walking and safer streets scheme and for safer routes to school, by establishing 20mph zones in residential areas.

A 20mph limit, with physical features, is a lot safer for the mix of people cycling and for people walking to school or work. When traffic speeds are lower, it is much safer to cross the road and people can interact visually with drivers—there is human interaction. We have an opportunity to take a radical look at what we have and to use it more wisely. I say "radical" because, in the past 30 years, we have not considered the balance in how we cater for the different modes of travel. However, that has happened in some of our European partner countries, where there are safe networks for getting to school.

I have been involved in various European projects. It was incredible to see, in a small town in Denmark, that more people were cycling to work and school than were taking their cars, yet there was no congestion on the roads. That shows that, if we plan and really go for it over several decades, we can achieve the type of modal change that has been achieved in those European countries.

**Rob Gibson:** I am tempted to go back to fundamentals. If we are to have a joined-up network and we are to encourage youngsters to go to school, we come to the immediate problem of the right-hand turn. As I mentioned in a previous meeting, that is an issue in my village. In Denmark, it is the left-hand turn. We heard earlier about experimental layouts that are put in place to encourage cycling. That is one thing. We are talking about joining up with the road network and about what the regional transport partnerships can do to support cycling and walking. However, there are practical and basic issues that are hard to get over. In my village, parents will not let their children cut across the line of traffic, but that is the only way to cycle to school. When we are faced with such issues, we will have to take much more complicated and expensive measures to increase cycling than we might have had to do if the infrastructure had been built into the road system 50 years ago.

**Alex Macaulay:** The various professional organisations in the UK that are involved in road design and other forms of transport design, such as the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Institution of Civil Engineers, have produced comprehensive guides on good design standards for cycling. My authority has produced design guidance for cycling that applies throughout the SEStran area with a view to getting consistency of approach. The issue that the member raises is certainly a problem, but it is not insurmountable. There is a design solution to that problem and to any other problem.

There are two big issues. One is that the provision for active travel modes has not been seen as a high enough priority to allow the various public agencies to invest seriously to the extent that public agencies have done in mainland Europe. Secondly, the excuse has been made that funding is not available. We all know that funding is available, but it is spent on other transport projects. If we set the civil engineers loose on a problem, they will find an answer, but there are issues to do with political leadership and priorities for investment. You need to put the ducks in a row before the professionals will be able to solve the problem that you mention. You are right that, as long as we do not solve that problem, parents will say, "My child will come to school in a car," so there needs to be an incentive and priority must be

given to that work. There are technical solutions to all the problems.

**Frank Roach:** Alex Macaulay is right that the concentration on long-distance routes has not necessarily benefited local communities 100 per cent. The reason for that concentration is perhaps because the Sustrans network grew up based on railway lines.

The fact that trunk roads and local roads are controlled differently does not help the situation either. In many cases, the trunk road's footprint is wider, which facilitates putting in a bit of cycle track when some maintenance or upgrading work is done. I will give a small example. I have been involved in a proposal to extend the NCN across Skye to Uig. To be honest, we would be hard pushed—

15:15

**Rob Gibson:** What is the NCN?

**Frank Roach:** It is the national cycle network. We would be hard pushed to get many people using that route in proper numbers, so there will be a concerted effort to put in some small circular routes for local communities to provide an immediate local benefit, in that people will be able to get out and do a few miles. We must get away from the long-distance leisure market and concentrate on the utility market if we are to make serious environmental and health gains.

**Rob Gibson:** I am tempted to take the matter a little further by pointing out that, in Copenhagen, we heard that there is a public debate each year about the danger of left turns, for example, and what caused casualties. The cycling public are involved with the authorities in discussing how to improve matters. Are we in Scotland ready for a discussion about where and how accidents happen?

**Stuart Knowles:** One key issue—this goes with everything else that we have said—is the need for better training. That applies to training not only child and adult cyclists but motorists in thinking about the environment in which they are driving. Petra Staats from Sustrans, who is German, told me that when drivers drive along the road in Germany they think about the pedestrians and cyclists throughout their journey, because that is how they are educated. When they get to a turning off the main road into a minor road, they think about needing to give way to the footway or to cyclists. That is in their psyche and there is a lot more active travel in Germany.

In the softer measures, training is paramount, although there is an issue, in that we need to invest in people to do the training. Cycling Scotland is taking that forward at the moment, but

a lot more needs to be done. I heard yesterday in a transport safety forum that the civilian police staff who carry out training for schools are struggling to get volunteers to train children in cycling, and they have not got to on-road training yet.

There are many areas of training activity, but we must not forget that there is a need for the driving test to test drivers' awareness of the active travel environment. We need to start thinking about that.

**Frank Roach:** There is a willingness to consider accidents. In London, there has been an increase in female cyclists in particular being crushed by heavy goods vehicles when HGVs turn left at lights, which has resulted in substantial dialogue between the freight interests, cyclists and the police. There is a move to suggest that there should be more advanced stop lines, so that cyclists are out of the way, and that trucks should have mirrors fitted so that they do not have a blind spot on the left. There is a strong willingness to investigate the causes of such accidents.

**Rob Gibson:** I will move on from one form of training to another: railway training. The committee has heard complaints about poor integration between cycling and public transport, for example poor cycle parking at railway stations. How might that be improved? Would it require a big investment? Is it the kind of thing that has to be managed? Is that how we get people to use bicycles a good deal more? In fact, people might have a bicycle at each end of their railway journey.

**Stuart Knowles:** Previously, a number of authorities used public transport funding to invest in safe storage at railway stations to encourage cyclists. In Fife, we have cycle lockers at railway stations. Once they have filled up, we buy another 10 and add them on. That has been successful. The demand exists once the facilities are provided. The cost of providing such facilities is very low compared with the cost of providing normal roads infrastructure. It is an easy win.

**Rob Gibson:** Although it is not a case of either/or. How much are 10 cycle lockers, for instance?

**Stuart Knowles:** I do not have figures with me, but we could—

**Frank Roach:** It is about £1,000.

**Rob Gibson:** That is worth knowing.

**Frank Roach:** One of the difficulties, of course, is that if you give the facilities to the railway industry, it wants to know the long-term maintenance costs. Another issue is access. It is often best to keep such facilities off railway industry ground. If they are on local authority ground, for example, it makes life easier for everybody.

On the question of physical access to lockers, there are issues around locking one's bike inside a locker and whether somebody has to be paid for a padlock and so on. Informal, outdoor parking against Sheffield stands is much quicker to achieve. I am amazed how many times I have walked past cycle lockers that have not been used. Stirling station has 20, for example, and I counted two in use about three months ago. Sticking up loads of lockers is not necessarily the solution if people cannot access them particularly easily.

**Rob Gibson:** I am concerned about buying the infrastructure, even at £1,000 for 10 lockers.

**Frank Roach:** It is £1,000 for one locker.

**Rob Gibson:** For one with 10 spaces—right. You say that more of them are being used. How many of them are being used in Fife? Can you send us an answer? It would be interesting to know. What percentage of cyclists are using them?

**Alex Macaulay:** SEStran has co-funded lockers at various stations, and they are being used to a greater or lesser extent—I cannot give you the figures. We need only to travel to the continent to see 1,000 bikes at railway stations, and they are not in lockers—they do not need to be. Bikes on the continent are generally pretty rickety. They are not brand-spanking new with go-faster stripes; they are bog-standard, urban, workaday bikes. Parking a workaday bike and locking it to a Sheffield stand is no deterrent to using a bicycle and then getting on a train.

**Rob Gibson:** We are aware of that—but we are where we are, in our circumstances.

**Alex Macaulay:** I know. However, we put Sheffield stands all over the city, and they get used. There is no reason why Sheffield stands cannot be used at railway stations, bus stations and other transport interchanges. There do not need to be lockers. I suggest that there should be a balance, with a lot more Sheffield stands than lockers. Lockers should be available for people who are precious about their bikes because they have cost them £2,500 and they want to lock them up safely. If someone locks a bike to a Sheffield stand properly, it is just as safe as it is in a locker, in my view.

**Frank Roach:** On-train storage of bicycles is the subject of regular complaint. It is difficult to achieve, and obviously it is expensive. Most railway carriage refurbishments put more seats in, not fewer, therefore cycle space is very hard to come by. In many cases such space needs to be pre-booked; otherwise, the equivalent of bed blocking takes place left, right and centre.

HITRANS has been involved in getting additional space, particularly to deal with the Land's End-John o' Groats problem. However, it is not possible to satisfy the entire demand. We must create additional parking provision. We could also promote the use of folding bicycles, which provides a happy solution for a number of people. South West Trains has a whole load of them.

**Rob Gibson:** You have anticipated my next question. There are clearly issues for people who need to take their bikes with them. You have offered a solution involving folding bikes, but those must form a pretty small proportion of the bikes that are bought.

**Frank Roach:** Yes.

**Marlyn Glen:** We have already heard some clear answers, particularly from you, Mr Macaulay, about making active travel a national priority, with ring-fenced funding. You clearly support the creation of a dedicated walking and cycling budget, to be provided by the Scottish Government to local authorities and/or regional transport partnerships. Can you add anything to explain the thinking behind that? Why should there be a dedicated budget?

**Alex Macaulay:** I have made this argument before about transport in general. You need only look back over the past 30 or 40 years to see that whenever we have gone into a recession and experienced a time of restricted budgets, one of the major targets for savings and cuts has been transport. We all accept in the transport scene that active travel has been the Cinderella of transport, and transport has, in many ways, been the Cinderella of public investment in times of financial stringency.

Having said that, if we consider the targets that the Scottish Government has set for active travel and modal shift, active travel should not be the Cinderella of transport, and nor should transport be the Cinderella of public investment. Active travel brings not only transport benefits; it is associated with major health benefits, as well as secondary health benefits from a reduction in pollution, because people shift out of cars and on to bikes, and therefore do not pollute their neighbours as they drive along the street.

We all know that local government is seriously stretched for investment and funding at present. The difficulty with transport is that investment does not bring instant returns—it generally takes a long time and a long build-up to achieve what you want to achieve in the transport sector. We may seek to shift people's hearts and minds away from using the car and towards undertaking more active travel, but that will not happen overnight; it will take a long time.



There is a strong temptation when budgets are tight to invest in the things that give you a very good and quick return for your money in terms of political votes—you might ask, “What can give me a good return between now and the next local election?” That is why I believe that the initiatives that we need to change people’s hearts and minds need long-term continuity, and must be identified as a national priority. In the current context, local government is free to apply its own priorities for investment, but those might not coincide with a national priority of active travel, if we had such a priority. That is why I believe that active travel needs to be a national priority.

**Stuart Knowles:** I will give the committee a good analogy. The Government rightly identified the introduction of 20mph zones in residential areas as a key plank of the national road safety strategy, and it ring fenced money for local authorities over a number of years. We were under pressure in our local authority—we were asked why we were spending money on 20mph zones instead of patching up the roads or building hospitals. However, the Government was firm about that vision. In Fife, we had a 40 per cent reduction in injury accidents, which was well below the national target. In that case, the Government set a very ambitious national target and another ambitious target for the next 10 years, and made funding available while effectively telling local authorities, “That is what you are going to do with that money.”

That initiative was successful, and many analogies can be drawn with regard to active travel. The Government had a vision 10 years ago to reduce the number of injury accidents. The vision now is that we need more active travel—we have obesity issues, and carbon challenges in relation to reducing our use of fossil fuels. The 20mph zones are a good example of an issue in which the Scottish Government took the lead and was successful in setting a priority and seeing it through.

15:30

**Alex Macaulay:** The analogy with traffic calming is quite apt. Having been responsible in two previous incarnations for introducing fairly extensive traffic calming throughout Edinburgh, believe you me, I know that it is not easy. It causes ructions with the local population and the car driver. It is a rough ride for local politicians, to be frank, and that would be the same in any authority.

Many of the things that we want to do to promote active travel are just as difficult to achieve. Some people call them the softer options, but there is nothing soft about them. They are difficult because people are wedded to their cars,

and anything that is perceived as reducing the capacity for cars is highly contentious and difficult to achieve. It is a rough ride for local politicians who want to implement such options. That reinforces the need for strong national direction, and reinforces what Stuart Knowles said earlier.

**Frank Roach:** In 1987, the city of Trondheim put 8 per cent of its budget into cycling, which has resulted in a 25 per cent modal split in favour of cycling. If you go around Trondheim now, you will find a 9 per cent split, because it is winter, but for two thirds of the year 25 per cent of people travel by bicycle. That is tremendous, and just goes to show that, in a challenging environment, such a shift can be achieved.

**Marlyn Glen:** What staff and financial resources will your organisations be able to apply to implementation of the cycling action plan? Will they be sufficient to achieve the 10 per cent modal share for cycling by 2020?

**Frank Roach:** No—pure and simple. We have very limited funds. We have carried out a series of active travel audits across 10 communities in the Highlands and Islands, and we will be doing all the key regional centres by the end of next year. The amount that we have to spend on capital infrastructure is tiny and our local authority partners find it hard to come up with money. We are just talking about really small measures like dropping kerbs, perhaps allowing a bit of two-way cycling down a one-way street and other really small things, but the money is just not available.

**Stuart Knowles:** Spokes has monitored the amount of money that has been put into cycling. There was a peak for Scotland in 2007, when the amount got up to about 4 per cent of the transport budget, but it is fast descending to 1 per cent, and the modal share that we have is 1 per cent. However, our target or vision is not 4 per cent; it is 10 per cent. The countries that we have been talking about that have achieved their targets have invested. Northern European countries are investing on average about £14 per head per year, and they have been doing that for about 30 years. When Scotland achieved 4 per cent, that was still less than £4 per head, and we are now down to spending about £1 per head. We are not going to make the change if we do not show a commitment to it, so those figures are quite telling.

**Alex Macaulay:** I refer you to the table in my written submission about the SEStran position, which is quite stark. In 2006-07, SEStran and its partner authorities were spending about £2.3 million on active travel. During the coming financial year, that will be down to about £449,000, of which the SEStran contribution is only £113,000. That is in the context of there being demanding national targets. We should be doing more and putting in more than we are.

Purely on the SEStran budget, the loss of direct funding for travel planning has been compensated for to a certain extent because the full £113,000 that is coming from my authority has been taken away from other transport projects. We have shifted that money in order to invest in active travel. However, our budget is limited and our partner authorities are quite entitled to set their own priorities for expenditure: they are not prioritising active travel.

**Marlyn Glen:** You probably know that the committee has heard calls for 10 per cent of all transport budgets to be spent on walking and cycling. What is your view on that level of spending?

**Stuart Knowles:** I have thought about the matter long and hard. We have investment of 1 per cent and we get a modal return of 1 per cent. The investment figure for the continent is up around 15 per cent, and there is a return there of 15 per cent or more. Therefore, there is a lot of causal evidence that a direct link exists. It will not be a one-to-one link, but it is pretty close.

**Alex Macaulay:** I am looking at my figures. About 12.5 per cent of my project's budget is currently spent on active travel, but 12.5 per cent of not a lot is not a lot.

**Marlyn Glen:** That is true. It is all relative.

**Cathy Peattie:** I have questions for Stuart Knowles, some of which I suspect have already been answered. The committee has heard evidence that the fear of fast-moving traffic—either of the real or perceived risk—is the main reason why people choose not to cycle. What are local authorities doing to reduce traffic speeds in appropriate locations? Stuart Knowles has spoken a wee bit about twenty's plenty, but can he talk about other initiatives?

**Stuart Knowles:** I welcome being able to talk about that. There was a lot of opposition to 20mph limits in urban areas for a number of years, but people are now falling over themselves to get them introduced in their residential areas. There has been a culture change away from opposition to them and people saying, "You can't do that because it's anti-car," to their saying, "We need that because it's safer for our children and us." We have turned the corner, just as we have with drink-driving, which Alex Macaulay talked about earlier.

I am sorry, but I have lost the thread of what we were talking about.

**Cathy Peattie:** I am interested in what local authorities are doing.

**Stuart Knowles:** Right. There are several routes between Rosyth and Dunfermline. The C road is a designated cycle route, but there is a lot of rat-running traffic on it. I have tried over 10

years to get a lower speed limit on that road. We managed to get the speed limit down from 60mph to 40mph, and the weight limit for heavy goods vehicles is down to 7.5 tonnes, but there have still been injuries and accidents on the road in the past few years. Therefore, we tried to do something again, but there was a lobby by a vocal minority, I think, for not allowing traffic access restrictions to all roads. If something is proposed that is seen as radical, vocal minorities will lobby local politicians and there will be a backlash.

Initially, the politicians were very much in favour of bringing down the speed on the road, restricting access to it and making it for local access, but the community councils and so on kicked in, there was lobbying and things went back. I have tried twice, with the support of the local community, which is fed up of having to get rid of the debris when people crash, to get a road designated. The road runs between two towns that are within a couple of miles of each other, it is not an A or a B road and it is perfect for walking and cycling. As Alex Macaulay said, 20mph limits are challenging, but we have to say what routes we are going to create active travel corridors on and go for it. We will achieve such things through central Government, regional government, local government and communities acting together in partnership on the same agenda with the same vision, not by my going off and trying to do them. However, that is not the national consensus on the way forward.

**Cathy Peattie:** Segregated cycle paths are an issue. Copenhagen provides good examples in that context: it has pedestrian paths, cycle paths and paths for general traffic. There is a feeling that such an approach would encourage people to cycle; perhaps it would deal with speed issues as well. Are we moving towards that approach? How can we move forward a bit more quickly, if you see that approach as being desirable?

**Stuart Knowles:** Basically, we need reallocation of road space. We have a lot of road space and it is allocated largely to vehicles and not so much to active travel. We need to consider the network critically and decide that not all of it has to be for motor vehicles. If people need access along a road by motor vehicle to get to their property, that is fine, but they can go at a very low speed. That will stop rat running on that road and ensure that through traffic goes on the main roads, which are engineered and designed for that. We can create a network at low cost by reallocating road space. We have the road space already but, at the moment, we do not differentiate—we allow cars access to all roads at the speeds that they want.

Local government can redetermine footpaths, widen them and have them used for walking and cycling. We have done a lot of that, but one problem with that is legislative. If there are

objections to such measures, the appropriate local authority committee cannot resolve the issue—it cannot overrule the objections and so they must be passed to the Scottish Government. It would be much easier if we could deal with those issues through the democratic process in local government. The committee might want to speak to officers in the Scottish Government about that, who can explain the issue. We are on the cusp of lots of opportunities, but we need to go for it.

**Cathy Peattie:** I return to the issue of money, which has been raised several times. SEStran's written evidence states:

"there are indications that the Local Authorities are not providing adequate investment to meet the targets."

Clearly, that is about budgets. Why is the investment not adequate and do you see any way round that?

**Alex Macaulay:** The figures are there for all to see. There has been a dramatic reduction from the level of investment in active travel a few years ago to the approved budget levels of our partner authorities for the next financial year. The figure has gone from more than £2 million in 2006-07 to about £336,000—that is the figure for eight local authorities for the next financial year in their approved budgets. That represents a very small proportion of transport budgets in the local authorities. As we have said, even when we were up at the 2006-07 levels, we were not on the way to meeting the national targets for walking and, particularly, cycling. With the reduction in expenditure, we are going in the wrong direction. The targets are higher, but the investment, as currently approved, has gone down substantially. I just cannot see how we will meet national targets with that level of expenditure.

**Stuart Knowles:** Since the removal of ring fencing, the capital budget in my local authority is going largely in three directions—new schools, social work facilities and the trust that we have set up for leisure facilities, such as swimming pools and sports centres. Those are the three big areas of capital expenditure. We were in the bottom quarter of the league table for the maintenance of our road network, but prudential borrowing has been agreed over 10 years to try to bring that back up. The same has been done with street lighting. Several street lights fell down and nearly killed people, so it was agreed that we had to do something about that. That is maintenance of an asset. So, in my council—the third largest in Scotland—priority has been given to education, social work and community services and to maintenance of assets. We have less capital than we used to have, so that uses up all the budget and it is difficult to find money to put into new things. Obviously, my view is that the council

should invest in those things, but the decisions have been taken while there is no ring fencing.

I am aware that the concordat between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government does not ring fence funding, but I return to my analogy with the 20mph zones. A national Government target was set for those and money was set aside to achieve it. We have achieved it and brought about a reduction in injury accidents. Something similar needs to happen on active travel through whatever is the right mechanism, which is a matter for members' consideration. The vision and target are commendable; the question is how we can best achieve them.

15:45

**Cathy Peattie:** Do we need a national pot in to which local authorities can bid?

**Stuart Knowles:** Yes. Targeted funding to get us to focus on active travel is the way forward.

**The Convener:** I will ask a quick follow-up question on your comments on allocation of road space. I am a little unclear about whether you were expressing no preference for the different physical options—physical segregation of provision, painted-out cycle lanes on roads, mixed-use spaces for walking and cycling—and saying that it is a case that each location is different, or whether cyclists and walkers have the right to expect uniform provision.

**Stuart Knowles:** Let us take Norway as an example. It provides for walking and cycling through off-road facilities that are mainly for tourism and leisure use, and it reallocates space on the road network for people to commute, go to the shops and go to schools. It is about striking a balance between the two approaches, not about doing just one or the other.

The convener has asked a good question, which I have been asking myself for years. I think that Norway has the answer in that it does both because it is trying to provide for different types of cycling. As a commuting cyclist, I want to get to my destination by a direct route. Therefore, the reallocation of road space is a logical approach. However, if somebody wants to go out for an hour's run for leisure reasons, they probably want to go somewhere off-road in the countryside where there is no traffic and noise.

A combination of the two approaches is necessary. Doing one at the expense of the other is not the way forward.

**Charlie Gordon:** My questions are for HITRANS and SEStran. What would be the impact on the uptake of walking and cycling if the Scottish

Government was to reinstate travel planning grants to regional transport partnerships?

**Alex Macaulay:** That would help. Earlier I reiterated the point, which I made in my written submission to the committee, that active travel—or any other form of travel—should be viewed not in isolation but as part of an integrated whole. The initiatives that have been implemented on travel planning in recent years have been successful because travel planning provides the integrated whole in planning a journey for a population of people—if we are dealing with an office or a hospital, for example—or for individuals. It provides the end-to-end solution for the journeys that people wish to make and addresses the individual problems along the way.

Reinstating a travel planning budget would be helpful, as far SEStran is concerned. In effect, it would be additional to the limited resources that we can currently put into active travel. Consider what we can achieve through travel planning for the limited investment that we make. Travel planning has shown benefit to cost ratios of up to 10:1. They create 10 times the benefits compared with the cost of providing individual or collective travel plans.

**Frank Roach:** Travel planning budgets also enable new developments to be tackled. If there were a potential new employer at a location and such resources were available, they could be used to assist the developer, with a happy outcome for active travel. At the moment, I do not think that that happens. All developers have to pay lip service to consideration of how people will arrive at their establishment, but it is extremely hard to enforce provision. Travel planning budgets would assist with that.

**The Convener:** Rob Gibson has a quick supplementary.

**Rob Gibson:** On transport of cycles by train, we are coming round to the next ScotRail franchise, which I think will be awarded in 2013. Would it be a good idea if regional transport partnerships and so on campaigned for the number of bike spaces on trains to be doubled in the next franchise period?

**Alex Macaulay:** That is a leading question. I do not know whether I would campaign for the number of bike spaces to be doubled; I would need to consider the issue carefully. A balance needs to be struck between getting as many passengers as possible on the limited stock that is available and using up space for pieces of hardware. Personally, I would far rather see people cycle to the station, leave their bikes there, get off the train at the other end and use the bus or walk to get to the end of their journey. To me, it seems to be an awful waste of resources to carry

a piece of metal along a railway track or even on a long-distance bus service. I understand the cyclist's point of view—he has invested in his bike and it is more convenient to have it at each end of the journey—but I would want to consider my position on the matter extremely carefully before committing myself to such a target.

I only hope that when the ScotRail franchise is renegotiated or retendered, the regional transport partnerships and the local authorities get the opportunity to offer some input because, as you may recall, we did not the last time.

**Rob Gibson:** It is an extremely city-oriented view to think that there will be a bus at the end of the journey.

**Frank Roach:** I know from experience that increasing the frequency of trains creates additional cycle capacity in one fell swoop, so my focus for the next franchise is on increased frequency, which would have that result. If new trains are planned, let us hope that some day, someone will come along with some new rural diesel sets. One would hope that cycle capacity will be taken seriously and that the current provision will be increased.

**Stuart Knowles:** There is an issue about the type of trip. If we are talking about commuting trips to cities where there is a capacity issue, it is probably better to leave one's bike at the station and go on the train. If one has to cycle at the other end, it is possible to buy a second-hand bicycle quite cheaply. In that case, the issue is the provision of cycle parking at both ends of the journey. There is also the folding bike idea, which Stagecoach, the holder of the South West Trains franchise, is encouraging. A folding bike is only the size of a suitcase once it has been folded down. That is how I go about it, but there are various options.

As a tourist cyclist, my view is that we need to be able to put bikes on trains, but the trains in question tend not to be peak-time commuter trains. If we want to encourage tourism and economic development in Scotland, bike spaces need to be provided as part of the ScotRail franchise because there are many people in Europe and the UK who want to go cycling in Scotland and we should do everything that we can to encourage them.

**Rob Gibson:** I had better not go any further with that line of questioning, but the commuter trains tend to be the very ones that people on long journeys need to use to get to the other end.

**The Convener:** We go back to Charlie Gordon.

**Rob Gibson:** Frank Roach wants to say something.

**Frank Roach:** I have completely forgotten the point that I was going to make. Oh, yes—it was about cycle hire. It might be worth looking forward to the next franchise to ensure that the future operator has a policy on cycle hire at stations because that is an easy way of resolving the problem.

**Charlie Gordon:** Is there a risk that the development of cycling infrastructure projects within a regional transport partnership area will be inconsistent, given the different investment priorities of the local authorities that lie within RTP boundaries?

**Alex Macaulay:** That is a risk; it is a direct consequence of the concordat with local government. Local authorities set their own priorities for investment. However, the regional transport partnership potentially has a beneficial role in cross-boundary issues. Where we as an RTP encourage movement—not only by cycling, but by using any form of transport—across a local authority boundary, we have a strong role in ensuring consistency of standards throughout the area. We are currently doing that through issuing guidance on cycling standards, information relating to bus passenger information strategies and so on. There are a number of areas in which we are addressing the discontinuities that can occur across boundaries.

Such discontinuities still exist, of course, but I am pleased to say that the seven RTPs in Scotland work very closely together. We have regular meetings in which we address discontinuity issues among our areas. It is easier for seven authorities to do that than it is for 32 authorities, although one could argue that for local movements, it involves the same issue with regard to working with the contiguous authority.

Charlie Gordon is right—there is a risk that there will be different levels and standards of provision, but it is part of our role as an RTP to address that.

**Charlie Gordon:** I thank Mr Macaulay for answering my next question too, but I will let Mr Roach answer the first.

**Frank Roach:** We have engaged a consultant to examine all the key settlements from Kirkwall all the way down to Campbeltown. That one pair of eyes is looking at each settlement and a methodology has been designed to examine the cycling and walking infrastructure. That has given us really good information that we pass on to the local authorities. We tell them, “Here are some of the gaps. We can give you a small amount of money. Can you give us 70 per cent to match it?”

We have a standardised approach, but we do not currently have the links between the key settlements. In some cases, the settlements are quite close, such as Ainess and Dingwall, and in

other cases they are much further apart, so those links have not been achievable. We need to develop the small networks and stitch them together, so that somebody who drops in from another country will find consistency—not least in signage and information—to help them to make their journey.

**Charlie Gordon:** Could the linkages between transport planning and town and country planning—the land use planning system—be improved to ensure that new development maximises the opportunities for active travel? Mr Roach touched on that issue a minute ago. What changes would need to be made to those systems in order for that to happen?

**Stuart Knowles:** As part of our 20-year structure plan, we are working with developers’ agents and transport agents on the transport assessments. We are setting modal split targets for new developments in line with what we are trying to achieve. Increases in public transport use and in active travel will be part of the assessment that those agents will undertake in relation to how to make the development work. That puts the onus on the developer to provide active travel networks as part of a new development. The trick is to get the investment in the existing network to fit in with that. We are proactively going down that route, because it will not happen if we do not help, enable and facilitate it.

**Alex Macaulay:** There are fairly reasonable connections between transport planning and town and country planning. In our area, we share an office with SESplan, which is producing the strategic development plan and providing the strategic transport input to the planning process. We, as the RTP, are consulted on all the new development plans, so as those come forward, they will need to take account of the regional transport strategy. That change was made when regional transport strategies were enacted through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005—the first time that a transport strategy has been statutory in the town and country planning process. Until then, local transport plans did not feature—they often still do not—in planning legislation. A major improvement has taken place over the past few years, and we are working to make the situation better.

16:00

In terms of moving down or through the scale of the town and country planning application process into what used to be known as the development control process but is now known by different titles such as development quality, the majority of active travel issues are being picked up well by local roads authorities and local authorities through their internal consultations. I hope that that will be

reinforced by the letter that we received towards the end of last year from Jim McKinnon, the chief planner, in which he encouraged local planning authorities to consult directly with regional transport partnerships on developments of regional significance. There are already some signs that that is bearing fruit. The objective is to ensure that regionally significant transport issues get as much emphasis in the development planning process as local priorities do. We are improving the position, but—as with most things—it all comes down to willingness to co-operate and to work together to achieve the best possible solution.

**Frank Roach:** The outputs from our active travel audits feed into the master planning process for certain communities and local plans. There is every intention to fully integrate the process in a few years so that the planners are fully aware not only of active travel but of public transport nodes, both current and potential.

**Charlie Gordon:** In answer to my question, Mr Knowles seemed to suggest that the opportunity exists to lever in from the development industry additional investment for active travel infrastructure. I assume that that would happen through planning conditions or planning gain section 50 agreements—

**Stuart Knowles:** It would happen through section 75 agreements.

**Charlie Gordon:** Can you quantify that?

**Stuart Knowles:** Yes. Our structure planning process now looks to taking that approach in terms of sustainable travel. We are at the beginning of the process; we have no outcomes as yet. We are going for the same approach with developers for all our seven strategic development areas, some of which are actively being progressed at the moment. It is a matter of working in partnership with the developers and their agents to see that through.

We are trying to strike a balance. We are talking not about putting in big roads but about accessibility for public transport, walking and cycling along with access that enables people to get their vehicles and deliveries to their premises. The emphasis is different, which is in line with Scottish planning policy 17 and the hierarchy of sustainable transport modes. That Scottish Government document has been around for a while but, instead of paying lip service to it, we are now proactively promoting that way forward for all development.

**Alex Macaulay:** We have produced guidelines for sustainable development in the SEStran area, which has been issued to all planning authorities in the area. The guidelines identify the different ways of maximising sustainable travel for different

locations and scales of development, and it provides examples of good practice from elsewhere in the UK and Europe. In that way, the planners who deal with an application are dealing not with a dry document that says that they must provide so many cycle stands or whatever; rather, they have good examples of how making the right decisions at the planning stage can influence the nature of a development to its benefit.

**The Convener:** I thank the witnesses for answering our questions.

*Meeting closed at 16:05.*

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