

Aberdeen Cycle Forum

Minutes of meeting

Townhouse, Broad St, Aberdeen, Tuesday 25th November 2014

Attending:

From ACF: Jyll Skinner (Chair) (JS), Gavin Clark (GC), Clare Roberts (CR) and 20+ further members.

From Aberdeen City Council: Cllr Jenny Laing, Leader of the Council, Cllr Ross Thomson, outgoing Cycle Champion

From Nestrans, Don Kent, Kathryn Mackay (Cycling Development Officer)

0. JS welcomed all and especially Cllr Jenny Laing. By way of introduction, a short video was then shown. Although edited to save time, the full version is available here

http://www.ted.com/talks/janette_sadik_khan_new_york_s_streets_not_so_mean_any_more?utm_content=awesm-publisher&awesm=on.ted.com_newyorkstreets&utm_medium=on.ted.com-static&utm_campaign=&utm_source=l.facebook.com#t-815464

1. Discussion with Cllr Laing

This was conducted mainly in the form of a Q&A. The record below is not verbatim but is intended to give a flavour of the discussion;

Q (ACF): What is your experience of cycling in Aberdeen.

A. (Cllr Laing): Not a cyclist myself. Have worked with ACF and others in the recent past on the Bikeability programme and still see this as important for influencing the future demand for cycling. Hadn't been involved in E,P & I Committee which deals with infrastructure, but now as Leader will be aiming to get involved in all these major Committees. The desire in there in the current administration and they are aware of the benefits that modal shift can bring. (The new Cycle Champion, Cllr Ross Grant had hoped to be here tonight but had been called away on urgent family business.) He is also involved in Transport & Regeneration Committee. Well aware of the Space for Cycling campaign and of course the Masterplan consultation is taking place this week so there is lots of opportunity currently. Also keen to hear from ACF if we feel we have had adequate opportunity to contribute to the Masterplan.

Q In ACF's 'manifesto' at the last election, we asked for an allocation of funds for cycling infrastructure up to the equivalent of the proportion of journeys made by bike.

A: The administration will bring forward a budget in the usual way. First priority has to be the Council's statutory responsibilities, then look to allocate funds to all the other priorities. It is a 5 year budget and not always easy to reallocate funds once that is underway. The process takes place in February each year, so now is a good time for ACF to exert influence

Q What do you need from us (ACF) to get cycling measures higher up the agenda? How does ACF make its case?

A Normally, a business case Facts & figures re health, injuries, benefits to the economy etc. Council tends to be very outcome focussed. A cycling strategy and Action Plan is being proposed and will be consulted on in January.

Q Is a separate cycling strategy really needed? Surely cycling should be integral to all roads / housing / development and maybe compartmentalising it on its own is the reason why provision in the past has been so poor?

A I believe that cycling is built in to other plans & strategies, but perhaps isn't always being drawn out properly. Certainly it needs a higher profile and I will take that point back to officials. Of course ACC also works with Nestrans.

Q Is it the case that in the first instance the designs being put forward by developers are lacking, and secondly Councillors aren't challenging them? Important to remember that it isn't just the 3.5% who currently cycle who are being let down: - there is huge latent demand from people who want to cycle but the current infrastructure puts them off. Just look at cycling levels in Holland or elsewhere

And it isn't just about travel, it's about the desirability of neighbourhoods which are currently dominated by car traffic. If you never see kids playing outside anymore, ask yourself why? The apparent 'vision' in the Council's policies isn't matched by reality. What is the point of cycle lanes when cars are allowed to park in them?

Research in England including a cost / benefit analysis showed a 5:1 gain from investment in cycling.

A All infrastructure in the city is suffering from under-investment, not just cycle infrastructure. Improvements need to be realistic and deliverable. Changes to cycle lanes would need new Traffic Orders. It has been done before (Altens example to prevent parking on pavements), and of course it only works if we then have the manpower to enforce the laws. So ambition is limited by resources and lack of funds.

Q. There is no real sign that ACC takes cycling seriously: the debacle of the Westhill cycle path is a case in point.

A The Council is being reorganised to fewer Directorates in an attempt to reduce silo working.

Q. The introductory film highlighted what can be done cheaply and easily e.g. school exclusion zones and 20mph limits in residential areas. What are the barriers other than cost? Does the Council aspire to the target for 10% of journeys to be by bike. It seems to be happening in England, so why not here?

A. Schools are a good example. Traffic safety around schools has been tackled in various ways but it is hard work and the behaviour of some parents in ignoring / abusing the measures put in place is unbelievable.

There has been a lack of political courage in the past – hence the importance of cross-party buy-in if we are going to get things done. In response to 20mph zones, the trouble again is enforcement because Police don't have the resources and advisory limits don't work without re-educating drivers.

Q. How does ACC work with Aberdeenshire?

A. The cross-border Regional Transport Strategy has just been consulted on by Nestrans.

3. Report from Cycle Safety meeting

ACF reps had met with ACC and Police. These meetings will now be held quarterly, the next one will be in February.

There had been some analysis of incident data, but whereas in the past this had shown up 'hot spots' where incidents were occurring, there didn't seem to be so much of a theme now.

We were asked to come up with 'messages' to go on the illuminated signs around the city.

4. Reminder re Masterplan consultation

Had been dealt with above

5. AOBs

We had been asked to provide someone to go along to talk to the Disability Advisory Group, on the particular topic of cycle bells and the visually impaired.

6. Date of next meeting.

Tuesday 27th January 2015.