

Aberdeen Cycle Forum

Minutes of monthly meeting

Tuesday 7th April (late March meeting) 2020

Introduction

We would never have expected at our last meeting that we'd be doing this (an online Zoom meeting) for the next meeting. Welcome to Gavin Thompson from Friends of the Earth who has joined from Glasgow. He's the air pollution campaigner and has worked with ACF before and hasn't been able to make a meeting for a while so the online meeting is quite helpful. Has been trying to monitor cycling projects and how they can help key workers or be used for exercising during the pandemic.

Present: Briony Kincaid, Gavin Thompson (Chair), Francesco Sani, Gavin Clark, Rachel Martin

Minutes of February meeting are on the web page.

Events

Reclaim the streets

At the last meeting, we were wondering how we were going to get the last £800 and it hardly took us any time at all after that meeting to get the rest. Special thanks to Inverdee House (SEPA, SNH and JNCC offices) for raising £170 on a bake sale. We also raised £640 from the city council. We applied first to the common good fund and they replied back to say it was closed but suggested another fund which we applied to and got the money! We need to check with Clare that the money has gone into the account. Just after we raised all the funds it became clear we'd have to postpone the event. Paths for All funding has to be spent by end of March 2021. We've asked council provisionally for 4th October with a contingency date for end of March 2021.

The Tour of Britain is due to happen in September (13th?) Will finish on Union Street and the Council were planning a mini festival of cycling the day before. The same mini circuit will be closed for junior races. A launch event for Tour of Britain before the lockdown. Gavin went to this - a lunch and presentation in The Townhouse. Mainly aimed at commerce and businesses that may want to sponsor the event.

Consultations

Berryden Corridor

We were consulted on it more than ten years ago and at that time it was a dreadful scheme with a dual carriageway coming into Aberdeen near the shopping centre and linking up to the roundabout at St Machar Drive. The latest plan has more of an effort for a dedicated cycle path so it has improved in the last ten years. A couple of months ago we were consulted on the cycle path plans - on one level it was reassuring to see they had made an effort to incorporate some design for cycling but on the other, it's still disappointing that they think the solution is to build more roads to bring more traffic into the city centre. Their argument is that they think this is an essential route. It would send the traffic down the Denburn and eventually connect to South College Street, and they say it's needed to proceed with the city centre improvements like pedestrianisation. Do we understand why the dual carriageway is needed to pedestrianise Union Street? It's possibly because they plan to remove capacity from Union Street and

they feel they need to replace the capacity somewhere else. Rachel says we should be taking capacity away from motor vehicles permanently and not replacing it elsewhere.

Francesco asks if anyone is measuring air quality in the city centre right now because it's clear the air is much cleaner right now. Gavin T says you can get the data from Scottish Air Quality -

http://www.scottishairquality.scot/latest/site-info.php?site_id=AD1&view=graphing&fbclid=IwAR0YYECoUCFGUf5TWUqegq3h320XsR6YWESpWfHdaREpMCgyjUpX_V4qN78

The main ones we're interested in are nitrogen dioxide(NO) and PM. There's been a fair bit of media coverage on the huge drops especially NO due to reductions of traffic. But we still have loads of old buses because they're still operating and we're also seeing lots of HGV delivery trips to supermarkets, but most places are seeing some reductions.

Francesco is wondering whether pollution will go back to normal levels after the pandemic or will something good come from this - people might sell their cars. Can we deliver services with less traffic for people in the city centre.

Gavin C says someone got in touch wanting to do a cycle count because they felt more people were cycling at the moment. We do usually do a cycle count in May but it may not be worth doing it this year because it won't be a fair comparison and people won't be allowed to leave their homes. However, the Council collect this data all the time with sensors on some cycle paths.

Gavin T has noticed lots of parents with kids out cycling and in particular teaching younger kids how to cycle. Wondering whether this will have a long-term impact with parents cycling more with their kids once all this is over.

Gavin C had a bike ride out on Deeside Way and noticed lots of families. Briony is back in Oban and says there are heaps of families walking and cycling all the time.

Gavin C - back to Berryden, are we all of the opinion the cycle forum objects to the plan? We all agree to submit an official objection. Gavin to write something before Thursday.

Bridge of Dee West

Gavin rushed off an official response on the last day. We don't have any indication of a timeline when any of it might happen.

Civitas Portas

Civitas Portas is a 4-year project which is just coming to an end. It's EU funding and about supporting sustainable transport in 4 or 5 port cities in the EU. We got invited by Caroline Hood (researcher at RGU) - she had been commissioned to do an evaluation of the project - she presented us (a group of 6 invitees) with some facts and then asked questions about whether we'd seen any improvements come out of it. Most of the answers were not very positive - it had been extremely underwhelming. The city council had funding but it's not clear how much, or how it has been spent, or even whether it was all spent. Our feedback would be incorporated an evaluation of the project, along with feedback from several other sources.

Jon Barron (NESTRANS Cycling Development Officer) also got in touch with us about funding to install some maintenance bike stations with tools and pumps. He consulted us about locations but it was very last minute (for which he was apologetic) - he needed to know by the next day. One has apparently already gone in on George Street. The plan was to get ten in the ground before the end of March but this may have been put on hold because of the pandemic.

We also got contacted by a consultant who had been commissioned to produce a journey planner app for the city. They've consulted a few cyclists to find out what's good or bad about cycling in Aberdeen

and what would you like about an app? Would it help? They also did similar consultations with motorists and users of public transport. The message they got from most of the cyclists present at the event was this isn't going to make much difference because what we really need is infrastructure.

Haudagain

Not a lot to say except they're now building this so-called improvement. We were consulted on it a couple of years ago and the designs for cyclists were pretty terrible and we told them that but they did it anyway. Someone from Farrans contacted us for input and we invited them to our next meeting but they didn't respond.

Duthie Park

Gavin C noticed about a year ago that they took away most of the cycle stands when they did work on the new cafe. He contacted them to find out whether they'd put them back and they said no. Gavin also felt that overall cycling in Duthie Park could be so much better. When it spills out onto Riverside Drive it's very poor for cyclists and doesn't accommodate them at all. Gavin did an audit and has written it up into a report. Is anyone interested in reading it for feedback? Rachel says yes. Gavin had also asked about the area near the car park that has been fenced off and apparently they've been given planning permission to make that a service road for the cafe. The end game for audit report would be to give it the Council, the Friends of Duthie Park and also publish on the website. Francesco noted that if you leave the traffic exit on Riverside Drive there's no easy way to join the bike path on the other side of the road. He also volunteered to comment on the draft report.

May cycle count

A bit difficult to plan since we don't know when the lockdown will end and we usually have to plan for this several weeks in advance. We're not going to make a decision right now about whether this will go ahead since it depends on how the pandemic plays out. We used to do it in May and September so we could just switch to September this year.

Any other business

Is there anything we can do during the pandemic? Francesco says he gets mixed comments from various groups and some people get upset when he comments about how amazing the city is to cycle in because they feel it belittles the tragedy of it. It's difficult to word things carefully to make sure you're not bragging about how wonderful things are.

Date of next meeting

28th April. It's our AGM.