



BULLETIN 02

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

June 2006

Welcome ...

A warm, summer welcome to you all, from the Aberdeen Cycle Forum. Whether you are an avid rider, a weekend potterer or a sofa cyclist (you like to watch it on the telly!) we do hope that you enjoy this, our second newsletter.

Since our last publication we have been tirelessly working on your behalf, trying to improve the cyclists lot in Aberdeen and the Shire.

In this issue we have an update on cycling facilities and consultations with the council, some great dates for your diaries, and a roundup of what's been going on locally and nationally in the world of cycling.

So pop the kettle on, grab a biscuit, and enjoy...

Regional Roundup

BIKE WEEK 2006

National Bike Week, the UK's annual celebration of cycling, runs from 17th – 25th June. Across the UK 250,000 people are expected to participate in over 1,500 events.

In Aberdeen events include the famous CTC "Try Cycling", "Denburn Sea-to-Source" and building on last year success the ACF "Commuter Challenge".

The commuter challenge is simple, all you have to do is cycle to and from work at least once during bike week, complete the simple form below and you will be entered into a draw to win £250 to be spent at a bike shop in Aberdeen. Learn more at:

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/bikeweek

In addition to the ACF and CTC events, Aberdeenshire Council are also participating, and in conjunction with Cycling Scotland will be offering free adult cycling training in Inverurie and Stonehaven on Saturday 24th June. For further details call 01224 664773.

TRY CYCLING

After the success of last year, "Try Cycling" is back for 2006. Beginning on 2nd April and running every Sunday until the 29th October rides start at 2pm from Duthie Park by the pond (off Riverside Drive).

Aimed at beginners, or those who haven't been in the saddle for a while, trained cycle leaders from the

Cyclists' Touring Club and Aberdeen Cycle Forum will lead short rides (of up to 3 hours) at a slow pace. If you need some practice or are seeking to regain road confidence this is the ideal way to keep fit, to gain a healthy heart and make cycling part of a healthy lifestyle.

Just turn up on the day or for more information phone Gerard on 01224 734799. It is necessary to phone in advance if children under 18 will be coming on the ride.

5TH ANNIVERSARY BIKE RIDE

On Saturday, 20th May a number of intrepid cyclists volunteered to mark the 5th Anniversary of the North Sea Cycle Route by cycling the southern portion of the route through Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen. It was a cold and windy morning when they left St Cyrus - you might have spotted them working their way up the east coast to Aberdeen battling head-winds and with flags flying! In Aberdeen another group waited to take over the challenge and set off looking for the Formartine & Buchan Way, a test in itself, where lunch and refreshments were waiting. The sun did eventually emerge, but most kept warm by layering themselves with the free T-shirts provided for participants to commemorate the event! Don't worry if you missed it though, we have another 5 years to plan for the 10th Anniversary and all are very welcome!



The group waiting in Aberdeen. Photo: L. Napier © ACF 2006

Anyone who still wants a free T-shirt to commemorate the event can still have one as there are still some left!

Dates for your Diaries

ACF Meetings: Normally held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm in the Townhouse. Next meeting 27th June. Check the website for details and dates.

Bike Week: 17th – 25th June 2006. Check out our article above for further details.

Cycle Scotland Ride: 27th August 2006. Join more than 2,000 riders of all ages and abilities on this exciting ride between Glasgow and Edinburgh, whilst raising money for Leukaemia Research.

Ranger Service Guided Ride: Sat 10th June, 2 – 4pm. Join the rangers on this gentle 14 mile circular from Aberchirder with excellent views over the River Deveron. Appropriate high visibility clothing and cycle helmets are essential. Meet at The Square, Aberchirder. To book a place call the Ranger on 01261 813299.

20th Inverurie Bike Ride: Sunday 2nd July. Meet at Kellands Park for a 12:00 start. 25 miles long, and something of an institution! www.gibr.co.uk.

Aberdeen City Council

IN THE RED...

Anybody wandering around the city centre in recent months will have noticed quite a lot of new cycle facilities appearing. Advance stop boxes are now at many junctions, and new advisory cycle lanes have appeared on King Street and Albyn Place. You may also have noticed very skinny lanes leading up to various stop boxes. These are filter lanes, supposed to help cyclists access the box in the midst of queuing traffic. We think the jury is out on whether these are useful or not – they can be used to shimmy up and beat the tailback, but they also risk putting us too far into the gutter if the lights change and the traffic starts to move. We would welcome feedback on these, and any of the other cycle infrastructure that is appearing. Email us at the usual address.

DUALLING DEVELOPMENTS

Users of College Street will have noticed the dualling being progressed. The Forum negotiated hard to get some cycle lane provision in but we accept this is not ideal; it is not as wide as we would like it, nor is it continuous and it tails off well before the junction with Guild Street. On the plus side, there is a toucan crossing which cyclists can use to give access to the entrance to the rail station and additional cycle parking has been put in there.

The plans for Market Street are looking more promising. Given that Torry is so close to the city centre, there should be good cycle links. But the choice of route is not appealing – Market Street or the QE2 bridge roundabout and College St. Options to route a cycle link through the new Union Square development were never explored. But there are firm plans now to have a full width cycle lane along both sides of Market Street, mandatory at least for part of its length. This is a start to the job of making cycling seem a viable option from Torry and we will have ongoing discussions with the council about developing these connections further.

BERRYDEN UPDATE

The Berryden/Hutcheon Street junction is the subject of a new consultation based on the prohibition of right turns at this junction. We welcome this smaller scale and less destructive scheme, but there are still concerns for cyclists. Banning right turns could force cyclists into onerous detours or onto higher risk routes – for example, returning from a trip to the Berryden retail park to Rosemount will be tricky given that a right turn into Westburn Road will be banned. All the traffic modelling shows, post pedestrianisation, much more traffic on the streets in and around Rosemount, but this change will do nothing to encourage cycling there.

The Forum argued in the pedestrianisation consultation that by trying to accommodate both rising traffic levels and displaced traffic from Union Street, rather than getting to grips with reducing traffic levels in the city, the surrounding areas would inevitably suffer. Rosemount looks like it will be the loser. A final decision is due by the council. (You can see all our consultation responses on our website).

CYCLE PARKING

The next wave of cycle parking in the city centre has commenced. ACF has worked closely with the city council in selection of sites. At the time of writing the stands had



Cycle stands near Golden Square
Photo: C. Gerrard © ACF 2006

been installed in Golden Square, Crown Street and North Silver Street. Work at the remaining sites (Union Street, Back Wynd, Shiprow, Thistle Street, School Hill, Rosemount Viaduct, John Street, Huntly Street, The Green, Langstane Place and St Nicholas Square) is expected to be completed within the next few weeks.

In the News

CYCLISTS MENACE LIFE AS WE KNOW IT!

Well, you'd be forgiven for thinking this if you were unfortunate enough to catch the hysterical outpourings of the Evening Express recently, when it 'discovered' that NESTRANS was considering funding bus and cycle lanes. Front page headlines and an attempt to whip up an anti cyclist (and bus lane) frenzy flopped badly - the EE online poll ended up in favour of the spending. So, they sent out an intrepid reporter to the Haudigan roundabout to search out irate motorists, but even here people were pretty balanced in their comments.

The EE claimed that £11m was to be spent – in fact, this was the sum of all the various proposals out of which £3m was available. The EE forgets that hundreds of millions have been allocated to roads in the region already and that bus users and cyclists deserve a fair share of investment. And, hey, aren't we supposed to be investing in alternatives to the car for all the reasons which are obvious in the real world...but clearly not in EE-land!

FACILITY OF THE MONTH

Warrington Cycle Campaign has a "facility of the month" page on their website, which caused many giggles at the ACF HQ. Check out:

www.warringtoncyclecampaign.co.uk/facility-of-the-month

Here's one of our favourites (photograph courtesy of David Arditti):

When we stopped laughing, we started wondering



whether Aberdeen has some of its own "interesting facilities" that we should be sharing – so if you know of any, let us know where they are, or even better, send us a photo.

GUARDIAN'S ANGEL

Our friends at The Guardian have seen the light, and much to our delight have expanded their Wheels section to include transport of the pedalled variety. We thought we should share Matt Seaton's excellent first

article with you – three cheers for The Guardian!

A Day Without it? No Chance...

Scarcely a day goes by when I don't use my bike. Mindful of carbon footprints, I consciously avoid using the car whenever possible. Even the weekly trip to the supermarket is now more often done with a bike trailer.

But this is not, smugly, to advertise my green credentials, because - in reality - it's more of a preference than eco virtue. I long since pedalled into a realm where cycling ceased to be merely a convenient method of getting from A to B. It's way beyond that. Scarcely a day by when I don't use my bike because, to be honest, I just hate it when I don't.

It's not about the exercise: I barely break a sweat for my 20-minute commute. But it gives me something I need. A deep physical pleasure certainly. I love the rhythm of the pedalling cadence: I find it soothing and calming. I don't ride particularly fast, but there is still the sensation of speed, the satisfaction of moving under one's own steam.

A great sense of well-being too. Somehow, I always seem to arrive at my destination with my head centred, my priorities clearer. And, having travelled without being cut off from the environment.

Sure, there's a downside: instead of being cocooned in a car's comfy, air-conditioned, music-filled compartment, you are fully exposed to the elements, and to the noise and grime of the city.

But the upside is that you see so much and experience it far more vividly.

The other day I cycled along a road not normally on my route, but one I have driven down 100 times. I looked up at a nondescript Victorian house I'd hardly noticed before and saw, on the second floor, two alcoves set in the wall in which sat a plaster-of-paris owl and pussycat. Who knows what their story is, but they made me laugh out loud.

A day without cycling feels incomplete, a day wasted. You could say I'm a bicycle cultist, a cycling obsessive, a bike freak.

But do you know what you're missing?

(Used with author's permission from The Guardian Wheels section, Wednesday December 21st, 2005).

HOT NEWS EMAIL SERVICE

Our website has a new feature; in addition to the quarterly newsletters we can now provide newsflashes when there are new items, and local alerts based on your postcode. Check out the website for details.

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk/email

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL RUN

Oldmachar Academy is making it easier for pupils to cycle to school with the construction of a new secure cycle storage facility. Funded by Aberdeen City Council and a NESTRANS Sustainable Travel Grant the “bike cage” was officially opened by the Lord Provost on Wednesday 10th May.

To mark the event the school staged a series of events including BMX demonstrations and presentations on the new Transition Extreme centre under construction at Aberdeen Beach. Several pupils participated in a bike trail and repair workshop lead by the Local CTC Grampian “Wobbly Wheelers” Group.



Note from Ed: The Wobbly Wheeler’s fond (and long distant) memories of mischievous times spent behind the Bike Sheds vanished when they saw the new facility; see-through, and permanently watched by CCTV!

BEING BIG

Fortunately this is not about physical size or weight otherwise I might have to apologise for winning the “does my bum look big in this?” competition hands down.

Being BIG is about being visible and persuading other traffic that you are to be avoided and given a clear berth. Its about safety, to use the well worn road safety phrase Be Seen Be Safe.

How much space you leave for something on the road depends on how BIG it is. BIG isn’t about how large you actually are but about how large you appear to be. Bigger distances need to be left when passing BIG things. As a general rule of thumb vehicles will leave you as much room as you leave for yourself. If you cycle very close to the kerb the cars will just scrape past, and the further out you are from the kerb the more room passing traffic will leave for you.



Be seen, if you can’t be seen, you can’t be avoided and given room. BIG things wear solid bright colours. Broken patterns merge with the background and break up your outline. Anything to make the bike BIG is good e.g. Bright panniers. Don’t forget to signal, it makes drivers take a bit more notice. BIG signals with eye contact if possible. Different is BIG, it gets the driver’s attention because they are not used to it. A recumbent or a tandem is BIG, a trailer is BIG, even a novelty hat might be BIG.

How much room do bicycles need on the road? Stick your arm straight out, fingers straight too, for a proper left turn signal, your fingertips should be clear of any lampposts or pedestrians. That is, the minimum so you can perform legal signals and still be totally on the road. This may be a bit further out than you are used to, but give it a try. BIG things stick out further into the road than little things. And BIG things need more room. Depending on the road, drivers may still scrape past so don’t be afraid to move a bit further out so that they consciously have to move around you. If you have to be steered around then you are really BIG and need to be left more space.

When approaching junctions where do you want to be? Where people are looking! Not tucked right up against the pavement, but out in the middle of the lane, in the line of sight. People (and vehicle drivers) see BIG things. BIG is in the line of sight.

BIG is partly about attitude, being seen, getting noticed and being in the way (in line of sight), taking a confident road position and not squeezing into the gutter alongside the broken glass, bits of metal and other cycling hazards.

There is an element of psychology about it, BIG can also be about loss of face. Colliding with cyclists is not socially acceptable and would ruin any claim of being a good driver. Hitting a cyclist is very expensive both in terms of reputation and financial cost. Cyclists can do a lot of damage when you hit them. They can damage wing mirrors or scratch shiny new body work. Definitely to be avoided.

Be BIG!

For a more amusing take on BIG see the following:
www.bikereader.com/contributors/misc/big.html

THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT (2)...

A £3 million investment looks set to make Brighton & Hove a European centre of excellence for cycling.

The city has been chosen to be one of five national 'cycling demonstration towns' to lead the way in promoting cycling as a popular, safe, and healthy way to get around.



The Department of Transport announced that the city has been chosen from 30 authorities to receive an annual grant of £500,000 over the next three years to continue to encourage cycling in the city. The council will match this funding each year, totalling a £3 million investment in cycling over the next three years.

The city was invited to apply for the status by the specialist group Cycling England.

Work will now start on a number of new initiatives to increase and promote cycling in the city. These will include:

- Introduction of Personal Travel Planning, making use of outstanding individual marketing techniques.
- Creating safe cycling routes to city schools
- Developing quality, European pilot projects of engineering excellence reflecting European best practice.
- Setting up a Cycle Training Centre for Outstanding Excellence (based in Brighton & Hove, acting as beacon for East Sussex)
- High profile Walking and Cycling Chatermark (involving leading businesses and individuals)
- Developing a wide range of partners to promote cycling as a friendly, fun and accessible transport mode for all.

City cycling initiatives already include a network of cycle lanes and paths, a cycling map of the city, more cycle stands and practical support for cycle training and maintenance sessions.

Your Chance to Make a Difference

URBAN CYCLE TRAILS

There is a real lack of leisure cycling routes, especially for families, in the city. There should be safe cycling opportunities nearby to where people live – they shouldn't have to load up a car and drive miles. There is the Deeside line and the Formantine and Buchan line, and you do see families cycling around the Beach area, but that's about it.

The Forum has come up with the suggestion of urban cycle trails – safe, circular routes of up to 5 miles, as far as possible on 20mph roads or on off-road paths and tracks, ideally with points of interest along the way, backed up by signposting and/or leaflets. Aberdeen has great potential for some excellent trails, but investment will be needed to get them up to scratch for family cycling. Have you come across any routes that might fit the bill? Let us know – the more ideas, the better! Email us at the usual address.

PINCH POINTS

No, nothing to do with expanding waistlines but those road narrowings that so often add to the stress of cycling.

Pedestrian refuges have been springing up in Aberdeen over recent years, which may be great for all of us trying to cross busy roads, but do narrow the road in a way that seems to challenge many motorists to try and squeeze through even with a cyclist around.

The Council has been piloting running cycle lanes through some refuges (Bedford Road and Springfield Road for example) to see if this helps encourage motorists to wait for the cyclist to get through before trying to overtake. But the feedback we have had is mixed. We are now hearing from other parts of the country that cyclists preference



Pinch point with cycle lanes: Bedford Rd

is for over-wide advisory cycle lanes through the refuge, to narrow the remaining road space to a point where it is clear that there is no room for a car to overtake whilst a cyclist is passing through. Would this do the trick? Any views on this would be welcome; email us at the usual address.

Quality Commuter Cycle Routes

Recently some of us from the ACF met with NESTRANS, the North East's regional transport partnership, to discuss the development of "Quality Commuter Cycle Routes" into the city. Those who follow local news will recognise these as the corridors recently featured in the Evening Express' delightfully understated and well informed articles about the wisdom of spending on Cycle infrastructure. As a consequence of the meeting we prepared and presented a submission for NESTRANS; you can find the full version on our

web site, but here are some of the main points.

At present, there are few safe and direct commuter cycle routes between the growing settlements around Aberdeen and the city and its main areas of employment. As a consequence, cycle commuting rates are low and existing cycle commuters have to contend with unsatisfactory and unsafe conditions. The Cycle Forum receives regular complaints about the poor cycle commuting options both from current cyclists and from commuters that would like to cycle but are discouraged; a clear latent demand exists for utility cycling. Strategic investment in quality cycle routes within the main commuting corridors will:

- encourage more cycle commuting.
- fit with the intention to provide alternative transport choices to encourage a shift away from car commuting
- integrate with travel awareness and travel planning strategies
- open up options for more safe and flexible cycle journeys as the city cycle network develops
- as a valuable spin off, open up more local leisure cycling opportunities by providing connecting links.

What is a Quality Commuter Cycle Route?

Commuter cycle routes follow the major commuter corridors used by all forms of road transport and therefore present unique challenges. Roads tend to be busy, are often dual carriageways, with the adjacent networks of minor roads equally busy and probably more dangerous to use at times of peak traffic flow. As we demonstrate below, most attempts at creating cycle routes along these corridors fall short of the mark in providing infrastructure that is safe, useful and desirable to the commuter cyclist. Consequently, we feel that whilst existing road infrastructure can be improved to facilitate cycle use, in many of these corridors the routes will need to be, at least in part, completely segregated. Key criteria are:

- Route continuity – the cycle route must be as continuous as possible, without ‘cyclist dismount’ signs and barriers that force dismounting, or any other features that significantly slow the cyclist’s progress.
- Route surfaces should be of good quality, allowing bikes of all types to use them (road and mountain bikes). They should be well drained, well lit and well maintained (including regular sweeping).
- Off-road cycle route entrance and exit points must be designed to ensure safe re-integration with the road infrastructure. Exit / entrance points can be the weakest link in a cycle route, potentially negating any safety and journey time gains made.

- Commuter cyclists need routes that link as directly as possible to their destinations; detours and delays will deter use. Cycle routes should be convenient to use and avoid complicated routing.

- Ideally, cycle routes should enable the commuter to match or better the journey times they would achieve using the road system alone.

It is of utmost importance that the cycle routes attract existing and new cyclists to use them, and to keep using them.

Key commuter cycle routes

We believe that the following routes represent the main commuter corridors around Aberdeen.

- Westhill – Kingswells - Aberdeen
- Dyce – Aberdeen
- A96 Corridor: Inverurie – Kintore – Blackburn – Aberdeen
- Portlethen – Cove – Altens/Aberdeen
- Balmedie – Bridge of Don Park and Ride
- Deeside Corridor

Useful Publications & Websites

There are a host of great websites out there – these are a few of our favourites:

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk – Got to plug our own site!

www.cyclingscotland.org – A great site with some top tips for all types and levels of cyclist.

www.ctc.org.uk - Probably the oldest cycling organisation in the world!

www.sustrans.org.uk – The sustainable transport charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic.

www.bikeweek.org.uk – A week of events and activities held throughout the UK.

www.visitscotland.com – comprehensive collection of area maps for you to purchase.

www.chooseanotherway.com – Tired of travelling by car then - choose another way. Information on cycling, walking and public transport.

www.ctcgrampian.org.uk – Local CTC group.

Contacts

Contact us:

Email: info@aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

Contact your local councillor:

<http://www.aberdeency.gov.uk/acc/YourCouncil/Councillors/default.asp>

Or contact the Council offices:

<http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/acc/YourCouncil/Default.asp>



Spotted a pot hole? If it's in Aberdeen city go to:

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/acc/Services/FaultReporting/fault_form.asp?ID=2

Or if it's in the shire, either:

Email roads@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or phone 08456 08 12 05.

The Small Print

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Next meeting: 27th June – newcomers welcome!

If you wish to receive this newsletter by email, you can register with our mailing list at our website.

All information is correct to the best of our knowledge; ACF does not warrant it's accuracy or fitness for any purpose.

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And Finally ...

WAITING FOR A TRAIN IN EDINBURGH?

If you ever find yourself with a little time to spare between trains at Edinburgh Waverly, you should consider paying a visit to the Bike Station, which is located on the station concourse just to the left of the Booking Hall.

Ring the bell to the right of the door and you will gain entrance to stairs leading down into the catacombs, which host a vast collection of bikes in various states of decay, renovation and cannibalisation.

In this underground warren, which makes The Illicit Still (ACF's favourite watering hole) look like the



Albert Hall, it's walls are festooned with arrays of chain rings, forks, wheels and all the ingredients that go into the assembly of the wonderful mechanical construction, of which we are all so fond. A mixture of mostly volunteers beaver away in this warren, assembling serviceable bikes, which are sold on for a nominal sum to deserving and needy causes and individuals.

At any given time, they will have about 2000 bikes in stock and their financial turnover is about £2500 per week. There is a mixture of paid staff and volunteers who are all fully trained, and they even have inmates from Shortts Prison working as volunteers as part of a rehab project. Their finance relies on donations and the principal ones are from the Scottish Parliament and Edinburgh City Council; the latter were persuaded that a donation of £5000 would cost less than paying the landfill tax on the bikes that the money would help reclaim!

Over the years, their activities have mushroomed: they have an above-ground branch in Edinburgh (The Castlecliff Bicycle Workshop). Two similar operations have started up in Glasgow, one in Perth and there is the prospect of one in Clackmannan. They have a Cycle Training Manager and a team qualified to train both beginners and aspirant cycle trainers. The outfit is big enough to take on substantial contracts; a recent one was to supply 75 bikes to a Primary school, train the children to ride and take them out on a short tour.

Whoever is the founding father of all this deserves a knighthood!