

BULLETIN 01 - January 2006

www.aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

Welcome ...

A warm welcome to the ACF's first newsletter. The Aberdeen Cycle Forum is a voluntary group founded in 2003 to encourage and develop cycling within Aberdeen.

Whilst you may not have heard much (or anything!) about us, we have been beetling away in the background, working with both the Council and cycling organisations to try and improve the cyclists' lot. One of the aims of this newsletter is to let you know what we have been up to, and what we can look forward to in 2006, plus providing snippets and titbits of information, and generally entertaining you.

We welcome feedback and contributions; if you would like to provide either please don't hesitate to get in touch (contact details at the end of the newsletter).

So, sit back, grab a coffee, and enjoy...

2005 Roundup

TRY CYCLING

Back in March 2005 when there was still snow on the ground, CTC Grampian started their popular "Try Cycling" events; a series of free short rides on a Sunday morning for those who have not cycled before or have been out of the saddle for a while. Seen by many as an ideal way to get some practice and (regain) road confidence, they have proved very popular.

Sunday 26th September marked the last ride of 2005; a total of over 50 new cyclists have participated, many of whom have continued to cycle, and reaped the health and fitness benefits as a result.

Try Cycling will be back in 2006; watch this space for more details...

CYCLE MAP UPDATE

The Aberdeen Cycle Map was launched by ACF in July 2004 and revised in March 2005. In addition to existing cycle lanes the map also shows recommended routes for cyclists to avoid the busier junctions, cycle parking in the city centre and the location of local bike shops.

Maps are available from the central library, the tour-

ist information centre on Union Street and city centre bike shops. If you can't find one, or you know a good location to distribute them please get in touch (details at the end of this newsletter).

BIKE WEEK 11TH TO 19TH JUNE 2005

As part of Bike Week, ACF held a competition for everyone who cycled to work at least once during the week, the prize being £300 of cycling shop vouchers kindly provided by Aberdeen City Council.

The prize was won by Trevor McIntosh, pictured here with ACF Co-chair Jeremy Rushton.



Photo Louise Napier, © ACF 2005

ABERDEEN'S FIRST CYCLIST SURVEY

Also as part of Bike Week, ACF held an on-line survey of all the cyclists in Aberdeen who participated in the competition.

Over the course of Bike Week, 483 journeys were recorded by the survey. The key points were:

Almost two thirds of respondents indicated they had cycled instead of taking the car. This is higher than expected and shows the enormous potential to encourage cycle commuting, even amongst current car drivers.

When asked to describe the benefits of cycling to work, environmental reasons were mentioned by a few, but personal benefits appear to be the main motivator:

Exercise and health benefits of cycling were key factors; fresh air, feeling invigorated, and cycling being a great start to the day were also mentioned. Many respondents also found cycling to be faster and more reliable than taking the bus.

On the downside the density and speed of traffic, inconsiderate bus and car drivers, and the lack of cycle lanes were mentioned as key factors detracting from cycling in Aberdeen.

Overall, ACF believes this feedback is helpful in highlighting the positive messages that organisations

should promote to encourage cycling. Cycling is an enjoyable way of getting some routine exercise and is a reliable and efficient way of getting around. It also points out the priority issues that are holding back cycling in Aberdeen, especially the need to develop more cycling infrastructure and to improve driver behaviour around cyclists.

CYCLE PARKING

The Cycle Forum carried out a survey of extra cycle parking for the city centre over a year ago. More cycle parking is needed, and we worked with the Council to secure funding and agree sites. The new stands arrived but since then ... nothing. The latest deadline we have for installation is the end of January.

Dates for your Diaries

ACF meetings: Normally held on the last Tuesday of each month 7:30pm at the Townhouse. Next meeting Feb. 24th. Check the website for more details and dates. Please enter via the Broad Street entrance.

Bike Week: 17th-25th June. A great opportunity to spread the word about cycling and to get your organisation involved. Check out www.bikeweek.org.uk for ideas and details. The Cycle Forum will be repeating its successful prize draw for those pedalling to work during that week – check out our website nearer the time.

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.

Aberdeen City Council

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

The City Council is moving ahead with a wide range of road schemes on the back of the proposed pedestrianisation of part of Union Street. The Cycle Forum's response to these various schemes can be seen on our website. Overall, whilst supporting the pedestrianisation plan we would have liked this to have been at the heart of a programme to reduce traffic volumes in and through the city, not as an excuse for building more cycle unfriendly schemes such as dual carriageways and high volume junctions. It all smacks of out of date 70's planning, not modern thinking about quality urban centres and sustainable travel.

Berryden Road/Hutcheon Street: Despite the cycle unfriendly proposals for either a huge roundabout or a gyratory type system (with the significant demolition of granite houses and other property in a conservation area) being thrown out by councillors, Roads have decided to re-recommend the gyratory type system, despite months of consulting the local community and other 'stakeholders'. So back to square one – the Cycle Forum will be re-iterating its objections to a scheme that does everything for single occupancy commuting but nothing for cyclists.

College Street: The dualling of the top end of College Street is going ahead. We managed to secure some cycle lane provision but we would rather not have to deal with a dual carriageway right in the centre of town. One positive is that there will be a toucan crossing allowing easier access for cyclists to the rail station from the College St side.

We have also had discussion with the Council and First Scotrail about more cycle parking at that entrance.

South College Street/Market Street: The proposals are to extend the dualling down to Riverside Drive, and for extra road space on Market Street. The Forum has raised the issue that effectively Torry is being cut off from any hope of safe and attractive cycle routes into the city centre. Councillors have asked that cycle route options be investigated. Roads are consulting us much earlier in relation to these plans so we hope we can rescue something that means this whole area doesn't become a no go zone for cyclists. We can still influence the outcomes here – please get in touch if you want to get involved.

20mph zone for the city centre: This is a very positive proposal but isn't agreed yet. Councillors chose the outer zone, meaning Union Street and quite a wide net-

work of surrounding streets. The Forum is very supportive: evidence from other European cities is that extensive 20mph (30kph) zones have been a key ingredient in making city centres more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists... and shoppers. There is still time to write to your local Councillor to support this proposal.

You can find your local councillor and their contact details on www.aberdeencity.gov.uk, by using the hyperlink at the end of this newsletter, or get in touch with us if you have any problems.

Union Street pedestrianisation: The Forum is keen that pedestrianisation does not cut off a direct route that many cyclists use. We believe that cyclists can be accommodated whilst minimising the risk of conflict with pedestrians. We are looking for good examples from elsewhere in the UK or overseas where cyclists and shoppers mix successfully! If you know of any examples, please get in touch.

Third Don Crossing: We have had some very positive discussions with the Council team, and currently have a blueprint for what should be a very cycle friendly route.

In the News

CYCLING IS THE NEW 'COOL'!

Dogged by decades of poor image (cycle clips or trousers tucked in socks – what a fashion dilemma), and a popular perception that any urban cyclist must be, well, unhinged, it comes as a great shock to hear that cycling is now seen as 'cool'. That's cool as in desirable, not cool as in an Aberdeen summer. This is according to the Guardian, so it's wise to be cautious, as the Grauniad has a reputation for misspelling. So, is cycling 'cool' or 'loco'?

Apparently London has seen an upsurge in the powerful, the famous and the fashionable taking to pedal power. Boosted by the congestion charge, cycling levels are soaring, and rather than being a statement of eccentricity, to cycle is now trendy. Cycle friendly fashion, cycle gear and "the idiot in the 4x4 that cut me up" is now the talk of the town. How long before this sweeps up to Aberdeen? Don't hold your breath! Now what should I do with these flapping trousers...

BACK TO BASICS

Fancy training to be a cycle trainer? We are hoping to arrange a series of sessions to train up a number of volunteers as cycle trainers. The Council has kindly offered to fund this initiative, which involves Cycling Scotland. The idea is that the trainers will be able to

deliver a few days a year of training or confidence building for budding or out of practice adult cyclists. Evidence shows that this is an effective way of encouraging people back into the saddle and to cycle more confidently. We are planning the sessions for March. The details are still being worked out but if you are interested please get in touch with us (contact details at the end of this newsletter).

THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT (1)...

A new six storey office development near the centre of Edinburgh has more parking for cycles than for cars. Almost twice as many in fact – 37 cycle spaces against 21 car parking spaces. This has been dictated by a combination of the city's traffic congestion and the 'lifestyle of young office workers'. Can we have some of that lifestyle up here please!

THE WPR

The Forum has not taken a position either for or against the WPR. We have, however, made our views known about the potential severance of quiet cycle routes out of the city, the need to build in cycle provision at all junctions and the absence of any facilities for non-motorised users on the bridges over the Dee and the Don. Now the final route has been chosen, we will be taking a fresh look at the issues that arise for cyclists.

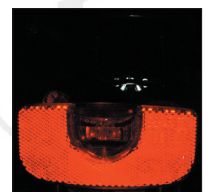
Friends of the Earth are taking the Scottish Minister of Transport to court for continuing with the planned building of the M74 extension. The Western Peripheral Route is likely to be another candidate for such action.

FLASHING IS NOW LEGAL!

Sorry to disappoint, but this only applies to the lights on your bicycle. Until very recently the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations specified that: to be used at night, a bike must have one steady fixed light, white at the front and red at the back.

The attachment of any flashing light to the bike, whether in addition to the fixed ones specified or not, was not legal. Many (normally law abiding and sensible) cyclists have technically been breaking the law by using flashing lights on their own or in tandem with fixed ones. The reason behind this "scandalous" behaviour is a genuine desire for cycle safety, and flashing lights are very visible at night.

We can polish off our halos again as the law has now changed. The Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005 No2559) came into force on 21 October 2005 and now allows the following:



- A front position lamp capable of emitting a flashing light (whether or not it is also capable of emitting a steady light) which is fitted to a pedal cycle; or cycle trailer and is capable, when flashing, of emitting light to the front of an intensity of not less than 4 candelas (the flash interval is to be between 60 and 240 times per minute).
- A rear position lamp capable of emitting a flashing light (whether or not it is also capable of emitting a steady light) which is fitted to a pedal cycle; or cycle trailer and is capable, when flashing, of emitting light to the rear of an intensity of not less than 4 candelas (the flash interval is to be between 60 and 240 times per minute).

That was the legal bit. The important thing is that we can all now cycle in the dark with appropriate lighting, and without flouting the law!

Contacts

Contact us:

Email: info@aberdeencycleforum.org.uk

Phone: Louise on 01224 523327

Contact your local councillor:

<http://www.aberdeencity.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: 28th February – newcomers welcome!

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

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

And Finally ...

MUSINGS FROM THE SADDLE

When one cycles a regular route, after a while the surroundings become a more prominent feature of the ride than the navigation. Of course, one has always to be aware of the various hazards that may suddenly arise, but flights of fancy and a more considered observation of the environs can lift one out of the repetitive nature of the ride...

My regular commute used to take in Maberly Street, which is home to a mill and a grand old warehouse; a red brick building appropriately named The Bastille. A feature there, which I became familiar with, was a series of manhole covers, presumably associated with mill drainage. One of these stands out as the smoothest ride over a drain cover that you'll ever experience in your travels by bike; if you shut your eyes (not advised!), even the most sensitive of backsides on the hardest of saddles would hardly notice it. This pinnacle of the art of drain cover engineering is just about unique in the city as far as I know, and raises the question of what happened to the consummate craftsman that created it? Why did he not go on to create further masterpieces elsewhere?

Maybe the answer is that his talent was recognised early and the inevitable happened: he was promoted to a desk job at HQ.

STOP PRESS

News just in on the Berryden / Hutcheon St junction proposals. The re-recommended gyratory was once again turned down. The Roads Department have been asked to go away and reconsider. Watch this space...

More news just in - Councillors have just approved plans for the 20mph zone.