

# East Lothian Council – Proposed Cycling Strategy (DRAFT)

## Background

Scottish Planning Policy (February 2010) identifies walking and cycling as being the modes to which highest priority should be given in promoting sustainable travel. In such circumstances, the Council is keen to ensure that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are catered for on the existing road network, in off-road locations and in new development. This strategy concentrates on the requirements for cyclists but many of the facilities provided will also be available for pedestrians to use on a shared basis. In addition, secure, covered cycle parking facilities will be provided at locations where these do not already exist and where existing demand is greater than the current supply.

The Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy states that the Government will continue to support the existing programme of promoting walking and cycling. Cycling is promoted in the Regional Transport Strategy published by SEStran and the Council's Cycling Strategy will be incorporated into the revised Local Transport Strategy.

East Lothian Council has identified the promotion of healthy living as a core priority and the adoption of a cycling strategy would contribute towards this priority area. The health benefits of regular exercise are now widely accepted and cycling will be promoted as a viable option for shorter journeys for work, shopping, education and leisure purposes where exercise is obtained as part of the journey. There is a view that cycling is seen as a leisure activity by a large proportion of the population but its function as a transport mode needs to be emphasised and promoted. The Council's Healthy Working Lives group has promoted cycling amongst its many initiatives and this work will continue to be supported by the Council.

Research also indicates that a large proportion of schoolchildren would prefer to walk or cycle to school and the Council will continue its programme of developing "Safer Routes to School". The reason many parents give for driving their children to school is that they perceive the roads surrounding schools to be dangerous. Provision of safer routes would reduce this danger enabling more children to travel independently to school. Cycle training for pupils is now provided at many schools, however, there is a lack of similar courses for adults who would like to receive training before starting cycling, perhaps for the first time if they have never cycled as a child.

There is already a network of on and off-road cycle lanes and tracks throughout the County. National Cycle Network Route 1 (NCN 1) passes through Whitecraig and Musselburgh on its way from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh and the Round the Forth Route 76 runs from Musselburgh via Haddington to Dunbar. The North Sea Cycle Route, which runs for some 6,000 km through the countries surrounding the North Sea currently follows NCN 1 through the County. The Council has developed the John Muir Way as a trail around the coast of East Lothian and the North Sea Trail (a walking route round the North Sea) follows the John Muir Way through the County. The Council also has an aspiration to re-route the North Sea Cycle Route to run

closer to the sea, linking the coastal settlements by using sections of the John Muir Way and Route 76 where appropriate.

The Council has recently published its draft Core Path Plan showing additional paths to be developed, some of which will be suitable for cycling. The Council's emerging Access Strategy will also be instrumental in the provision of sustainable transport networks suitable for cycling.

Where new development is proposed, developers are currently required to provide appropriate facilities as detailed in the Standards for Development Roads document. This covers issues such as cycle parking, tracks and providing links to the surrounding network where appropriate. The Design Standards for New Housing Areas document sets out the key planning and transportation requirements for the design of new housing areas, including the requirements for Home Zones. Home Zones are a key element of the Council's drive to improve the design of new housing areas and these will be expected to form part of well-connected, permeable layouts which will facilitate walking and cycling. Travel Plans are required as part of the Transport Assessment for larger developments. These should set out the proposals for promoting the use of sustainable travel modes to and within the development and link to targets in the Council's Local transport Strategy.

The East Lothian Cycle Forum has now been established for three years and meets quarterly to discuss cycling issues in the County. Membership comprises Councillors, officials and local cycling enthusiasts.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives for the strategy are as follows:

- To promote and maximise the role of cycling as a transport mode, particularly for shorter journeys within settlements;
- To develop safe, attractive and convenient cycle infrastructure which encourages and facilitates cycling;
- To promote cycling for health and as a means of accessing leisure, recreation and tourist facilities throughout the County and further afield; and
- To ensure that the relevant policies to promote and increase cycling are incorporated into the Single Outcome Agreement, Local Development Plan, Local Transport Strategy, Road Safety Plan and other Council strategies as appropriate.

## **Policies:**

In order to meet the objectives of the strategy, the Council will adopt the following policies:

- The Council will allocate a percentage of the Roads and Transport capital budget to cycling on an annual basis to support the implementation of the strategy<sup>1</sup>. (Any funding from external sources eg. the Scottish Government, will be additional to this base budget figure). This will allow the preparation of an Action Plan with short, medium and long term initiatives;
- The Council will continue to fund the post of School Travel Co-ordinator/Cycle Officer to deal with school travel issues and cycling promotion and scheme development. (In the longer term, there is an aspiration to appoint a full time Cycle Officer when resources permit);
- Proposals in the Roads and Transport capital and revenue budgets, including maintenance schemes, will be audited to ensure that they conform with the relevant design guides<sup>2</sup> and incorporate improved facilities for cyclists wherever possible;
- The Council will ensure that new developments incorporate infrastructure and facilities for cyclists appropriate to the scale of the development. This includes cycle tracks and secure, covered parking;
- The Council will provide, subject to the availability of resources, on-road cycle facilities where appropriate and a high quality network of off-road cycle tracks, based on the following hierarchy:
  - Major routes for utility cycling trips serving employment locations, schools, health facilities, public transport interchanges, retail and leisure facilities;
  - Other connecting routes used for utility cycling, including inter-urban links; and
  - Recreational and tourist routes both within the County and linking with neighbouring Council areas.
- The Council will ensure that cycle facilities are maintained to an appropriate standard including sweeping and vegetation clearance;

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<sup>1</sup> The former Lothian Regional Council allocated 2% of its Roads and Transport capital budget to cycle schemes and it is suggested that this figure be used to establish a budget for cycling schemes in East Lothian)

<sup>2</sup> SEStran has recently published its "Cycling Infrastructure: Design Guidance and Best Practice" document. It is proposed that this is adopted by the Council and used in conjunction with Cycling by Design (Scottish Government) and the National Cycle Network "Guidelines and Practical Details" (Sustrans).

- The Council will ensure that it sets an example as a cycle-friendly employer by adopting the following measures:
  - Achievement of Cycle Friendly Employer status;
  - Provision of secure, covered cycle parking, storage lockers and showers at its places of employment;
  - Payment of a cycle mileage allowance for work-related trips;
  - Provision of centrally located pool-bikes;
  - Development of an employee Travel Plan to encourage the use of alternatives to the car; and
  - Encouragement of employees through the Healthy Working Lives scheme.
- The Council will encourage schools to develop their own policies for encouraging cycling to school in conjunction with the Schools' Travel Co-ordinator.