



BEAULY TO INVERNESS CYCLE ROUTE STUDY

Last year Highland Council TEC services agreed to fund a study into the feasibility of providing a cycle route between Inverness and Beauly. In fact the campaign and ideas concerning this route go back a long way and include such projects as the Inverness Cycle Route Network, The Round the Firth Route and the Beauly River bridge crossing. These projects have faltered through lack of a fully thought-out coherent policy providing for cycling and walking within Highland Council's area. Both HCC and the local Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Trust have been active in attempting to establish the route. The Trust has not only provided a 1km section of segregated footpath along the route but has also demonstrated the high level of community support for it. This path was linked to Kirkhill via a road crossing provided under the Cycling, Walking & Safe Streets scheme administered by THC. Hitrans provided some additional funding and Halcrow has been appointed Consultant to carry out the study.

When dealing with big consultants in the past we have often found that we are talking to a "generalist" with little experience of what it means to be a cyclist. However there are signs that this is changing. We were glad to meet the Halcrow's Cathy Kay, on the 9th May and to find we were speaking to a cyclist who had already ridden the route and noted some interesting opportunities. Her previous work included a number of projects to deliver cycling facilities in the North West of England and she is currently working on a project in Morayshire. Along

with community members from Kirkhill and Beaully we were able to tell her of our priorities for the route. This was a preliminary meeting; work proper will commence in the summer. Ms Kay intends to keep in touch throughout.

GC

ACTIVE TRAVEL ADVISORY GROUP

The Active Travel Advisory Group was set up to assist the HITRANS Board with respect to providing facilities for cycling, walking and other active modes of travel. HCC and CTC members attend as well as LA representatives. It is chaired by Moray Activities Officer, Chris Thompson, and Andrew Capes, HITRANS Travel Plans Officer, takes notes and gives advice. Despite time constraints the group managed to submit a detailed paper in response to the draft Regional Transport Strategy consultation. At this meeting it was decided to write to Transport Scotland (the new national agency for transport) to ensure that our priorities for Trunk Roads are received in time to be considered in the Trunk Roads Cycling Initiative review currently under way. We also heard of the progress of a major regional centre Active Travel audit being undertaken by HITRANS. (See page 3).

Cllr. Ron Lyon announced that he would be retiring at the Spring elections. Ron has been a vital supporter of HCC and cycling for many years but especially so in the last few years in his role as chair of Highland Cycle Forum and in the formation of the new ATAG. We have had higher profile council support but none more effective. Ron has ensured continuity, that due procedures are followed by the members and that promises made by officials are kept. Writing as someone who, for 17 years, has seen what happens without this sort of integrity of approach, I believe we owe Ron a big vote of thanks and we offer him our best wishes for the future.

GC

ACTIVE TRAVEL REGIONAL STUDY

At the ATAG meeting on 15th March Andrew Capes described a major piece of work that was being taken forward by HITRANS. This is a study of Inverness and 12 regional centres - Elgin, Dingwall, Invergordon/Alness, Thurso/Wick, Fort William, Portree, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Oban, Dunoon, Lochgilphead, Campbeltown/Rothesay. This work involves developing an audit methodology (sic) including methods for surveying and analysing data and producing an action plan. The development of the methodology will be followed by a phased audit of Inverness and the regional centres.

It has become clear that this is a big piece of work. It is the sort of rational analysis that HCC has been asking for since our inception and we are glad that HITRANS has taken this planned approach to identify:

- what is there,
- what is not there and
- what is needed and planning for these new and remedial works

There was some concern about confining the study to urban centres and indeed leaving out places like Nairn, Forres and Aviemore. However the relationship of centres to neighbouring communities and the linear nature of Highland community links will, it seems, be taken into account. Also, ATAG have written to Transport Scotland re Trunk Roads “missing links”. (see page 2)

Since the meeting we have heard that the first phase of the contract has been awarded to Halcrow. ATAG has asked for an early meeting with the consultant. (see page 4)

Proposed time table:

- mid July - Methodology Report,
- November - first tranche of settlements report,
- mid-2008 - study aimed to be completed.

GC

MODAL SHIFT - BEST PRACTICE

On 31st May we attended an ATAG meeting. In the morning we received a presentation from Halcrow, the consultant chosen by Hitrans to do the first part of the study referred to on page 3. ATAG will be issuing a press release shortly.

Part of Halcrow's presentation included examples of best practice from across the UK. In Hull, which has a pop of 250,000 and a cycle-to-work level of 12%, £2.5million has been spent on making improvements. Although no increase in cycling has occurred the numbers of Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) has dropped by 50%. In London there has been a spectacular and rapid rise in cycling journeys up 83% and KSI down by 23%.

Other towns have benefited from a project pioneered by Sustrans called Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM). All households in an area (min. 1500+) are contacted. From an initial interview individuals most receptive to considering cycling or walking are identified and assisted to change mode. It costs £20 per head and seems to achieve a 10 - 12% modal shift. Towns with a good cycling culture are easiest to achieve significant modal shift in. Much food for thought and hope!

GC

LETTERS - OPINIONS - ACTION - PARTICIPATION

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AGM SPEAKER - ANDREW CAPES, HITRANS

Andrew kindly agreed to speak to our AGM. He is a transport professional having worked for much of his life in the North East of England. Currently he is working for HITRANS as Travel Plans Officer. We wanted to know what the outcome of the draft RTS consultation (see page 2) had been. It was interesting to hear that there had been around 200 responses but that significant changes had come about mainly at the behest of the LAs. However Andrew indicated that the strong input on active travel had contributed to a significant “rearrangement” of the strategy inasmuch as the “Horizontal Themes” section (which includes active travel) had now been given more prominence at the beginning of the document. He also felt that the language pertaining to active travel had been considerably firmed up, with a substantially revised and expanded section about active travel added to the Horizontal Sub-Strategies section. It was a wide ranging, interesting and fairly informal talk and we look forward to working closely with HITRANS. Our thanks go to Andrew for coming to talk to us.

GC

Area HCC representatives:

Easter Ross: Ron Stewart (See p.3)

Badenoch and Strathspey: Dick Langridge (See p.3)

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There was a shortage of material for this Newsletter so I included this article from the Winter edition of Pedal Press, the Newsletter of the Merseyside Cycling Campaign. It was written by Peter Bates and indicates that cyclists and pedestrians can share streets amicably (e.g. Union Street, Inverness).

MAL

HARMONY IN FERRARA

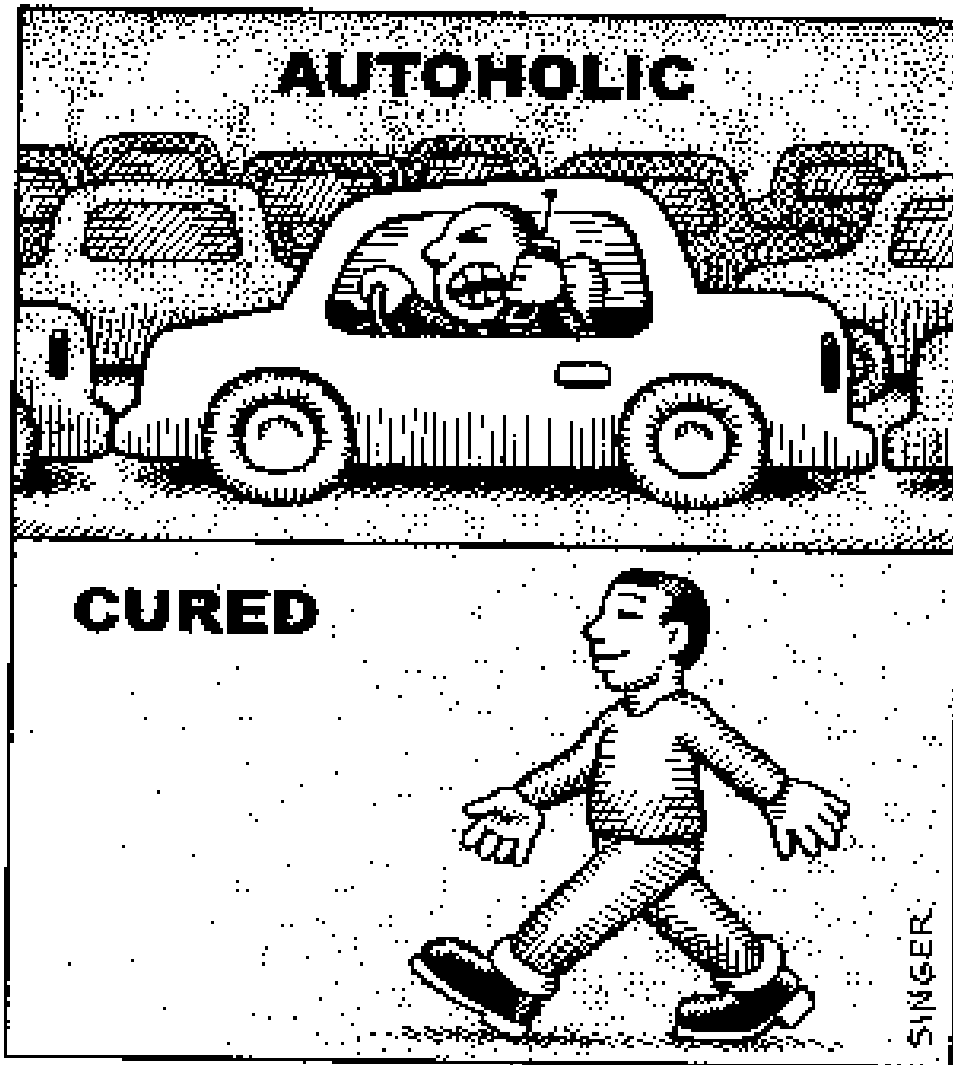
On a trip to Venice recently, I took the train across the flat plain of the Po to Ferrara - only really because of a long-remembered Browning poem "My Last Duchess", and the city's associations with the Renaissance harmonies of musicians like Gesualdo and Frescobaldi.

As a native of Oxford I should know the simple equation that *university city + flat land + medieval street layout = bicycles* - but I wasn't prepared for what I found in the city that claims the largest Limited Traffic Area in Europe. It wasn't just the sheer number of bikes and the range of cyclists that was surprising (clearly they weren't *all* students). It wasn't the free bikes provided at the station and at peripheral car parks for local key-holders to borrow to cycle into town. Or even the fact that the flamboyance of Italian driving applies to two wheels just as much as four.

What was interesting in the light of current Liverpool discussions is the way pedestrians and cyclists (and by no means slow cyclists) mixed amicably as they both cut straight through narrow streets in the largely car-free historic centre. Neither group seemed much disturbed by the presence of the other. During an evening's selfless observation from a pavement café I heard no bells rung in anger; I saw no angrily gesticulating pedestrians; and only one incident where a cyclist had to stop suddenly.

In Amsterdam - with laws favouring bikes, with a range of cycle lanes and with a national stereotype that is both pragmatic and phlegmatic - perhaps that sort of thing would be expected. But to find it in Italy is further confirmation that familiarity breeds content - two wheels and two feet can mix if people get used to the idea that cycles are a

normal everyday way to travel and cyclists aren't all murderous freaks - just people who want to go from A to B (and preferably not having to go via C and D.)



MEETINGS OF HCC.

The next meeting of the HCC will take place on Thursday 23rd August at the Spectrum Centre, Inverness at 6 p.m.

A835 TORE - MARYBURGH CYCLEWAY UPDATE

Moira Broadhead has continued to follow this by cycle-way by e-mailing the consultants (Halcrow). Cathy Kay of Halcrow (see page 1) who had been dealing with it is on secondment and Murray Innes has taken it over (InnesM@halcrow.com).

At the end of March the detailed design was awaiting comments from Transport Scotland and the aim was to finalise contract documents and go out to tender in April/May with construction ‘in the summer’. In a further e-mail on 23rd May they were ‘finalising design and tender documents and working towards issuing [them] early next month’.

Moira had also asked specifically about the River Conon bridge and was told that ‘the cycleway will utilise the footway on the northern side of the ‘bridge . . .’ (presumably as shared-use).

DL

Abbreviations Used in Newsletter

| | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|------|---------------------------------|
| CO | Cycling Officer | SE | Scottish Executive |
| CTC | Cyclists’ Touring Club | TEC | Transport, Environment Services |
| HCF | Highlands Cycle Forum | THC | The Highland Council |
| HIE | Highlands and Islands Enterprise | RTS | Regional Transport Strategy |
| NCN | National Cycle Network | AT | Active Travel |
| SCF | Scottish Cycle Forum | ATAG | Active Travel Advisory Group |
| LA | Local Authority | | |

ARDROSS SPONSORED CYCLE RIDES

10AM ON SATURDAY 23RD JUNE 2007

All ages, all abilities.
Social occasion with healthy snacks.

Details from: Stewart Campbell
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