



CHAIRMAN'S ARTICLE

May I introduce myself? I am the new chairman of the HCC, elected at the HCC AGM held on 23rd April 2010. I would describe myself as an enthusiastic cyclist who likes to cycle not just in the UK but also on long tours in foreign parts. Travel certainly gives you a good opportunity to see at first hand developments and attitudes that other countries have towards cycling. We here in the UK have certainly come a long way in recent years but many cyclists feel that there is still a great deal that can be undertaken to improve the experience of cycling. We are informed that there is an ever increasing number of people cycling. This needs to be recognised. I consider that we should be working together to ensure that additional resources are made available.

The committee of the HCC have had a review of the organisation to decide what they consider are the key issues for the next two years. This generated quite a number of topics and from this we have decided initially on four key areas to be developed during the coming months.

- Maintenance of current paths
- Web Site Development
- Lobby/Raise awareness
- Communication with members

This is a member organisation and if you have a particular interest in any of the topic areas indicated above we would like to hear from you.

While we are focusing primarily on the key issues above we would

still like to hear from members any suggestions on how cycling could be further developed in the Highlands.

I look forward to receiving your communications:

sep@albacareer.co.uk

Hamish Wood
Chairman HCC

CAN YOU HELP ?

We have had a meeting with THC Planning Department with the intention of exploring areas where we could develop a closer working relationship between THC and HCC.

THC do not have a statutory obligation to consult with HCC but recognise the considerable experience that some of our members have in cycling and road/path construction issues.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided that we would contact members to seek their co-operation in:

- 1) Having a look on line at a local level to see if there were issues regarding cycling coming before the planning committee
- 2) Having their names made available to the local planning officer who could make contact regarding any cycling issue they may have concerning an application.

We would encourage any interested member to make contact and we can discuss further this important role: **sep@albacareer.co.uk**

THC Planning Department have also agreed to make contact with HCC where large scale developments are being discussed for our views on what is being proposed before it goes to a planning committee.

Hamish Wood

MAINTENANCE OF CYCLE PATHS OCTOBER 2010

The upkeep and maintenance of cycle paths is a constant battle! Action will only be taken if cyclists make the effort to notify the relevant bodies of any problems or issues. Over the last few months I have been in touch with Gordon Sinclair, Transport Scotland with regard to:

- encroaching vegetation,
- lack of lighting on the N Kessock underpass
- unsightly graffiti
- surface defects.

Most of these issues are contained within a relatively small section of cycle path north of the Kessock bridge.

The response so far.....

Earlier in the year grit was removed from the Tore – Maryburgh cycle path.

Encroaching vegetation has been cut back in several locations and the underpass has been painted albeit only one coat! Work widening the path is currently ongoing.

Recent communication (14th Sept 2010) from Gordon Sinclair , Area Manager (North Scotland), Transport Scotland:

“Thank-you for your email detailing certain issues with the cycle path. I will ask Transerv to investigate those issues including the unsurfaced section under the large sign (I noticed this myself recently - this should have been picked up during the final inspection for the North Kessock Grade Separation scheme but unfortunately it was missed).

As far as the street lighting is concerned the advice I have been given is that the lighting has to be completely renewed (electrical safety as I am sure you will understand must be of the highest order). I will discuss again with colleagues to see if money can be found to re-light the

underpass.

As I said in conversation we would welcome advice from members of the HCC on locations where vegetation is interfering with passage along the cycle path.” (editor’s emphasis)

1. If vegetation is encroaching or there are defects please notify Scotland Transerv. Customer contact is free phone **0800 0281414** or **www.scotlandtranserv.co.uk** where a ‘Defect reporting form’ can be found.

2. If there is litter, broken glass etc. on the route then contact THC (TEC services). – they are the Litter Authority for the trunk roads. Inverness area email: **Inverness.tecsadmin@highland.gov.uk** Ross & Cromarty Tel: **01349 868440** for Inverness – Tore – Dingwall.

(TEC services will respond as soon as is reasonable bearing in mind that they have a small team dealing with all litter throughout Ross and Cromarty)

So it’s up to you! Do your bit !!

Moira Broadhead

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NEWSLETTER

AT	Active Travel
ATAG	Active Travel Advisory Group
CTC	Cyclists’ Touring Club
NCN	National Cycle Network
TEC	Transport, Environment and Community Services
THC	The Highland Council

BARCLAYS CYCLE HIRE BETTER KNOWN AS “BORIS’ BIKES”, LONDON

London’s first large-scale public bike hire scheme kicked off on Friday 30th July 2010 to a largely positive response from the public, with one commuter hailing the project as the ideal solution to the capital’s “overcrowded and overpriced transport system”.

The scheme aims to ease congestion on London’s commuter network through 6000 bikes at 400 bicycle ‘docking stations’ from Notting Hill in the west to the Tower of London in the east.

At present you have to have membership but that only costs £3 (for a key) if you want to hire a bike for up to a week. The key releases the bike immediately so no need to queue at a terminal.

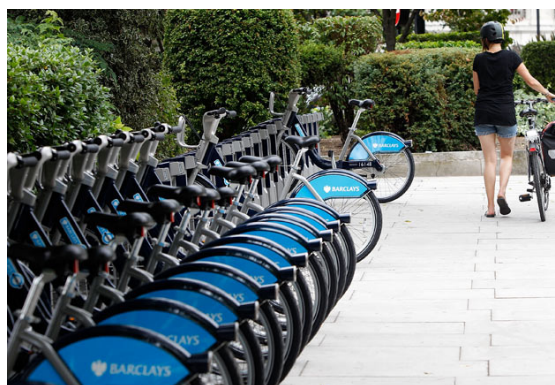
It is hoped that the scheme will be available for casual users (by credit card) by the end of the year. Costs will be exactly the same for casual users and members.

Check out the website for details www.tfl.gov.uk then click on how it works, costs, routes & maps etc.

Read some of the forum tips from pioneers of the scheme to make your cycle hire experience as smooth and as pleasurable as possible!

www.borisbikes.co.uk and

www.londoncyclist.co.uk



Needless to say there have been some teething problems. Some bikes and docking stations weren’t ready, there were IT and other technical glitches - and it could only be used by people who pre-registered online and received a key in the post.

Despite this and the ‘soft-launch’, a promising 250,000 trips were made by Boris-bike in the scheme’s first 3 weeks – although the eventual target is 40,000 trips a day. Still, it is also encouraging that Transport for London’s (TfL) board are now reportedly considering a further £81.7m to extend the scheme to mainline stations and out to the east of London in time for the 2012 Olympics.

It is, after all, a wonderful opportunity for lots of people in London to discover how much quicker and easier it is to travel by bike. Success should, we hope, trigger the funding needed to spread the scheme across London, and to other UK towns and cities. If so, this could be a major step towards creating a strong cycling culture, not just in our capital but throughout Britain.

Moira Broadhead with additions from Cycle Digest 63

[Free cycle maps (16 overlapping areas) for London are available by phoning **0843 222 1234** or through **www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/roadusers/cycling/cycle-guides-request.aspx**

We put one to good use recently so we could lodge one night with our son en route for the Camargue.]

MAL

HCC AREA REPRESENTATIVES:

Easter Ross: Ron Stewart The Anchorage, Barbaraville, Invergordon,
IV18 0NA 01826 842753 ra.stewart01@btinternet.com

Badenoch and Strathspey: Dick Langridge 6, Rowan Park, Carrbridge,
PH23 3BE 01479 841633 langridge@cali.co.uk

Isle of Skye: Jim Towers 3, Carbost Mor, Carbost, Isle of Skye 1V47
8ST jimtowers@btinternet.com

Sutherland: Steve Carroll Creag Charrach, Rockfield Village, Portmahomack, IV20 1RF biker_carroll@hotmail.com

BEAULY TO INVERNESS CYCLE ROUTE

Last April Kirkill and Bunchrew Community Trust (K&BCT) obtained funding from the Climate Challenge Fund. The award was to enable a cost and design phase of the project which has wide community, official and political support.

At the end of May, Mott MacDonald were engaged to carry out the work which was to be completed before the end of the year.

Two sections identified as community priorities will be designed and costed.

- Kiltarlity and Cabrich road junctions with A862
- Lovat Bridge (1.8km)
- Clachnaharry - Bunchrew

Work is well underway and outline designs are complete, landowners are being contacted about design options, and detailed design has started.

Landowners' consents will be needed before planning applications are submitted. This it is hoped will be completed by late November. K&BCT have had monthly update meetings with Mott MacDonald.

Ged Church - HCC and local member of K&BCT path group

LETTERS - OPINIONS - ACTION - PARTICIPATION

Chairman: Hamish Wood

Treasurer: Moira Broadhead Cul Mor, Drynie Park North, Inverness, IV6 7RP
moirabroadhead@hotmail.com

Membership: Lindsay Mackinnon

lindsay@tickettoridehighlands.co.uk

Newsletter: Mary Langridge 6 Rowan Park, Carrbridge, PH23 3BE
01479 841633
langridge@cali.co.uk

CYCLE TOURISM IN THE HIGHLANDS

Winter is fast approaching and the number of cycling tourists is dwindling as quickly as the daylight. The last few customers of the year have been lucky though and escaped the drenching meted out to those who ‘played safe’ and came in June! Fortunately the landscape and culture of the Highlands attracts plenty of cyclists in spite of the vagaries of the climate.

This year we have welcomed visitors from far and wide including Hong Kong, Japan and Israel. Our customers have a wide range of experience and it is difficult to judge what they are capable of from first impressions. A group of young Americans were full of stories about triathlons and the long distances they cycled ‘back home’ but toiled when confronted with the steep slopes by Loch Ness. The retired lady doctors from Belfast however, conquered the infamous Bealach na Ba road into Applecross on the first day of their trip round the north west coast.

Day trips to Loch Ness are the most popular choice but it can be difficult to persuade people to avoid the A82. It’s a shame that Urquhart Castle is difficult to reach by bike from Inverness. Only experienced and fit cyclists would manage a return trip via the Great Glen Way in a day. A low level cycle path or the proposed Foyers to Drumnadrochit ferry would be very popular with cyclists.

While many continental visitors are aghast at the absence of dedicated traffic-free cycle paths the general feedback is that drivers, particularly on single track roads, are considerate and patient towards cyclists.

It is important that we continue to invest in cycling infrastructure not just for the benefit of local people but to attract more cycling tourists too.

Lindsay Mackinnon

www.tickettoridehighlands.co.uk

HCC MEETING

The next meeting of the HCC will take place on Thursday 25th November at the Spectrum Centre, Farraline Park, Inverness 6-8 pm

The following article which has a bias towards England has been copied, with permission, from Cycle Digest Issue 63:

MONEY WORRIES FOR CYCLING?

With cuts threatening right across government, CTC is working with other cycling and sustainable transport groups to make the case for a continued commitment to active travel.

Local authorities are already feeling the squeeze of the coalition government's 'deficit reduction' measures, and at a national level cuts look like they will have a very significant impact on the transport sector.

Already news of cuts is coming through: Hartlepool has abandoned a £200,000 project on cycle lanes and improved signage, meaning that the transport budget reduction required for this year has hit cycling harder than anything else. Despite evidence of the large benefit-to cost-ratios that smaller schemes such as walking and cycling generate, it is very possible that other councils will also scrap these lower-cost items first, rather than larger, less cost-effective measures such as public transport or road schemes.

With the Cycling Towns' funding running out in March 2011, there is a serious risk that the strong, long-term plans emerging from them will be jeopardised and the expertise in quality cycling promotion lost. This project was designed to emulate success in European cities where cycling promotion received high levels of expenditure over a prolonged period, rather than short bursts of energy that die away within a year or two. The outcomes of the public spending review will determine whether that principle is to be retained or whether decisions over long-term planning and promotion will be left to the whims of individual local authorities. CTC will be meeting Transport Minister Norman Baker MP and with senior government officials to press for support for cycling from both transport and health funding streams and for improving the delivery of local authority cycling strategies.

One of the most alarming of the immediate cuts has been for road safety – for which the grant to local authorities has been cut this year. The result has been in some cases councils removing support for their local safety camera partnerships, for which much of the grant paid. Already Oxfordshire’s fixed safety cameras have been turned off and others look set to follow. Other councils, notably Nottinghamshire, are continuing to fund the cameras through other budgets. This, despite robust statistical evidence pointing to a significant fall in casualties at camera sites. The Chief Constable with responsibility for traffic policing, Mike Giannasi, has written to the Department for Transport warning of the likely impact on casualties.

In part due to the existence of cameras, speed limit compliance has been gradually improving in recent years, with the latest figures suggesting that 30 mph limits are observed by around 50% of cars, up from about a third in 1999. Furthermore, last year deaths and injuries for all road users fell to the lowest level ever, mainly a result of lower volumes of vehicles on the roads. If more vehicles return to the roads following the recession and enforcement falls, the encouraging change in casualty levels may not, regrettably, continue at its current trajectory.

CTC has requested a meeting with Road Safety Minister Mike Penning MP to press the case for measures to deliver more as well as safer cycling, following CTC’s ‘Safety in Numbers’ campaign last year.

[In the same CycleDigest Peter Hayman, CTC Councillor for Scotland notes that:

Scotland seems to be benefiting from the UK-wide increase in cycle use. By the next CTC/Cyclenation Conference in Edinburgh in November, we should have a better idea of whether schemes for cycling are going to be cut or if cycling will be seen as a cost effective way to move us all forward.]

END OF CYCLE LOAN PRICES

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has issued guidance on how much employers should charge their employees if they want to buy the cycles provided under the 'Cycle to Work' scheme at the end of the loan period.

The rules have always stated that the price should reflect the cycle's 'fair market value', but precisely what this is hasn't been clear till now. To date, 5% of the original price has been the usual deal and this will still be fine with HMRC if that is genuinely the 'fair market value' of the machine in question – due to wear and tear, for example. However, the new guidelines suggest that 25% of the original price for a one year old £500+ bike is the acceptable fair market value and, as such, will not be viewed as a taxable benefit. Anything less than that will have to be explained to HMRC and, if there is no valid reason for it, a tax charge may ensue.

CTC hopes this clarification will not put employees off a scheme that has played a major role in boosting both cycle sales and cycle use in the last few years.

Copied, with permission, from CycleDigest No. 63

* WANTED *

The HCC intends to create a new web-site to keep members informed of what the committee is doing and raise awareness of the Campaign. As yet plans are at a preliminary stage but we would be grateful if anybody who has the necessary skills and interest could help us in this task. Simplicity is the byword and economy too but a certain level of payment may be considered. If you could offer assistance or would like more information about the content of the web-site, frequency of updating etc. please contact Hamish Wood (sep@albacareer.co.uk).

CYCLING ON THE UP, SAY LATEST STATS

In June, Department for Transport statistics revealed that cycle use in GB went up for the second year running: figures for 2009 show total distance cycled was almost 5 billion km – the highest since 1991. Motor traffic fell for the second year running, with goods vehicle movement down to their lowest since 1996.

The figures for cycling use are never as robust as those for other modes because of the relatively low usage. However, the National Travel Survey, recorded using different methodology from road traffic statistics, confirms that cycling levels per person were up to 46 miles a year. There was a very slight change in number of trips, which has remained steady at the 15-17 per person per year level for decades. The growth in cycling appears strongest amongst the highest income quintile, where on average people cycle 77 miles per year. The National Travel Survey also asks questions on cycle commuting, with some interesting results: 8% of Inner London residents now say they cycle to work, a significant jump on previous years.

Casualty statistics show a mixed picture, however. Deaths for all GB road users in 2009 decreased to the lowest ever level at 2,222 of which 104 were cyclists, but the number of cyclists seriously injured rose by 6% to 2,606, while total casualties amongst cyclists rose by 5% to 17,064. Worryingly, this suggests that the rate of injury isn't declining at the same rate as it is for other modes.

- Roads and Traffic Statistics:

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/roadstraffic/

- National Travel Survey:

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/nts/

- Reported Road Casualties:

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/

Copied, with permission, from Cycle Digest Issue 63