



## **CYCLING ACTION PLAN FOR SCOTLAND**

### **We need your support !**

The consultation period for the CAPS has ended. The plan was put together by Cycling Scotland with responses to the Scottish Government.

Over 200 written responses were received. At least two HCC members responded in detail. The view of campaigners appears to be that the plan is very weak and way behind where we should be.

No details of actions or analyses of costs are contained in the plan.

**The plan asks questions to which the answers are already known and spends a lot of time explaining that cycling is good for health, environment and economy.**

We could have written all this for them at no cost (and frequently have!)

**However there is commitment by the Minister, Stewart Stevenson, to achieve the target of 10% all journeys by bike by 2020.**

**Although the dead-line for responses has passed you can still influence the process.**

**Please write to your MSP or MSPs, MP and Minister**

If you want some guidance on what to write - tell them that to achieve the laudable target set by the Minister we need

- A major re-allocation of resources to at least 10% of Transport funding for cycling
- A costed plan on this basis in time for the 2010 Spending Review
- Skilled and experienced staff (Cycling Officers) in all Local Authorities to act as leaders in developing cycling facilities
- Concentration on cycling as transport.
- Strong leadership in Central Government & Local Authorities

**Tell them to act now!**

GC

## LETTERS - OPINIONS - ACTION - PARTICIPATION

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## **TRANSFORM SCOTLAND AND CAR CLUBS**

Transform Scotland, which HCC supports, has recently announced a review over the next three months of Car Clubs development with a view to extending the benefits of car sharing beyond Edinburgh as an encouragement to the reduction of carbon emissions from transport. It has attracted the support of three of Scotland's regional transport partnerships, as well as Co-operative Development Scotland, ScotRail and the Scottish Government. Professor Stephen Stradling, Chair of the Transform Scotland Trust, said: "We will identify what is required to create a more supportive environment for both commercial car clubs to flourish in bigger conurbations and for co-operative or voluntary schemes in smaller communities".

Chas Ball, a transport consultant specialising in Car Clubs, who has been commissioned to lead the project, said: "Edinburgh led the way by creating the UK's first commercially run car club, and it remains to this day the largest car club in Britain outside London. But ten years after its introduction, there are still no large car-sharing clubs in Scotland outside of Edinburgh. There are, however, a number of new start-up and experimental schemes in the planning stage - in Glasgow, Aviemore, and Mallaig - which Transform Scotland Trust plans to document as part of this project".

To contribute to the review - and to provide opportunities to learn more about recent developments here and elsewhere in Europe - there will be three one-day workshops held during November in Glasgow, Perth and Inverness. Details of the programme and how to register a contribution are available at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/carclubsreview.aspx>>.

If you would like to contribute to the review directly - or know people in your locality who are looking at the car club option - Transform Scotland would be keen to hear from you at <[chas.ball@transformscotland.org.uk](mailto:chas.ball@transformscotland.org.uk)> or on 01484 454477. The deadline for receipt of submissions is Monday 16th November.

Although, on the face of it to do with car use this is of interest to HCC as Car Clubs encourage people to abandon car ownership. They are therefore much more likely to use cycling/walking for local journeys.

ML

## HCC AND THE DATA PROTECTION ACT

*(From Editor: The HCC Committee are currently considering ways to modernise our membership record keeping.)*

The Data Protection Act gives individuals the right to know what information is held about them. It provides a framework to ensure that personal information is handled properly.

The Act works in two ways. Firstly, it states that anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept for longer than is necessary
- Processed in line with your rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection

The second area covered by the Act provides individuals with important rights, including the right to find out what personal information is held on computer and on most paper records.

Should an individual or organisation feel they are being denied access to personal information they are entitled to, or feel their information has not been handled according to the eight principles, they can contact the Information Commissioner's Office for help. Complaints are usually dealt with informally, but if this isn't possible, enforcement action can be taken.

We hold only basic information about you which is limited to your:

- Address
- E-mail
- Telephone
- Donations

We do not share any of your information with anyone else without your prior consent. If you would like your information from our list or need any further information please contact anyone on the committee (see P. 2)

LM

## **PEDAL FOR LESS AT INVERNESS**

*(This article first appeared in the May Edition of the Friends of the Far North Line Newsletter and has been reproduced with kind permission of the editor)*

Scotrail has introduced a 'Ticket to Ride' for visitors to get out and about in the Inverness area.

The train operator has teamed up with Inverness cycle hire business to offer its rail customers discounted rates for hiring bicycles.

Staff from Ticket to Ride will even bring pre-hired bikes to greet customers from their trains at Inverness, Nairn and Forres stations at no extra charge so they can start exploring straight away. Customers arriving at other selected stations - including Dingwall, Elgin and Aviemore - can also have their bikes brought to the station, with reduced delivery rates applying for ScotRail customers.

The offer builds on similar partnerships with other cycle hire companies - most recently with Basecamp Bikes in Blair Atholl. Desmond Bradley, Transport Integration Manager at ScotRail, said "We are delighted to be working in partnership with yet another cycle hire company for the benefit of our customers. We are especially pleased that Ticket to Ride will deliver bikes to customers at certain stations for no additional charge." He added: "offering discounted cycle hire to rail customers really reinforces the message that you don't need a car to enjoy the magnificent Highlands scenery."

Lindsay MacKinnon of Ticket to Ride, [Ed. an HCC Committee Member] said "We're really pleased to be collaborating with ScotRail to help cyclists discover the Highlands. Our unique service makes routes like the Great Glen Way and Speyside Way much easier. Not only can we deliver bikes at the start, we can collect them at the other end with reduced rates for rail customers".

A 10% discount is available on full-day hire with a valid rail ticket and Freedom of Scotland Travelpass holders are entitled to 15% off. When booking please give at least four hours notice. To get preferential rates, customers should quote "Scotrail Offer" when making their booking. Discounted rates are subject to availability.

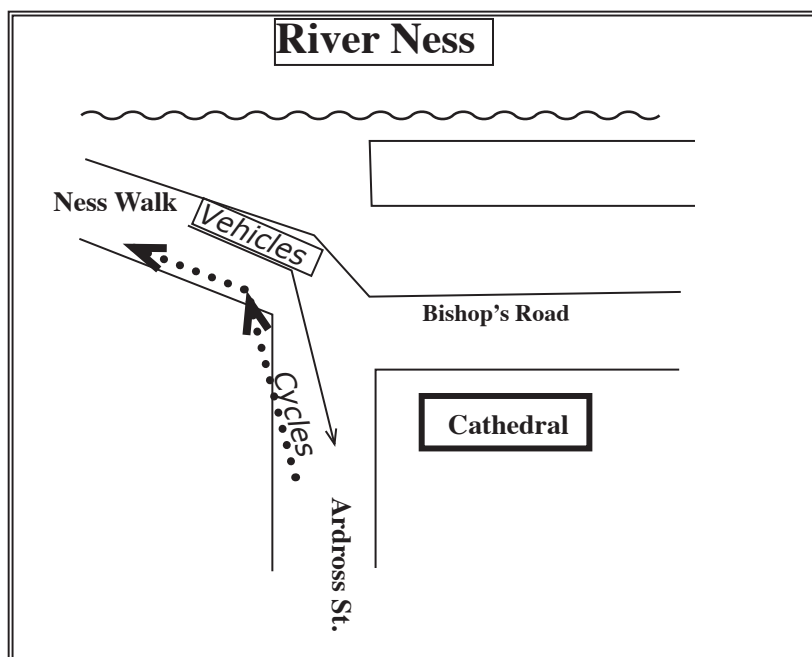
The Freedom of Scotland Travelpass is a Flexible Rover Ticket that covers travel on trains, ferries and a selection of coach services throughout Scotland - see [www.scotrail.co.uk](http://www.scotrail.co.uk) for full details.

Ticket to Ride, Inverness 07902 242301 <http://tickettoridehighlands.co.uk>

Basecamp Bikes, Blair Atholl, 01796 481 256 <http://www.basecamp-bikes.co.uk>

## NESS WALK CONTRAFLOW CYCLE LANE

Highland Council and their StreetScape consultations have made suggestions to try to improve the situation for cyclists using Ness Walk, Inverness, against the flow of traffic. Currently all they have done is mark a short section of cycle lane on the narrowest part of the road near the Cathedral and put up one sign at the start to warn of cyclists coming in the opposite direction.



They are proposing to remove the short lane marked on the road and introduce dropped kerbs to allow the section of pavement there to be used instead. This section of pavement is very wide and the outer section tends not to be used by pedestrians as it is on the outside of the corner. This then leaves

a choice of either crossing the road and using the pavement by the river, or continuing along the road which is now wider again and has good visibility in the direction of traffic. They are also proposing to put up more signs indicating that cyclists are allowed to cycle in the opposite direction to cars and to introduce a speed limit of 20mph for the whole length of Ness Walk.

R.H.

## **BEAULY TO INVERNESS CYCLE ROUTE PROJECT**

It had been intended that a bid for funds for the construction of a section of the desired community route between Lovat Bridge and Brockies Corner (Junction of A862 with west end of minor road through Cabrich and linking with existing community path to Inchmore) and for a design specification for the 3km section between Clachnaharry (east of Inverness) and Bunchrew, would be submitted to Climate Challenge Fund in June. It was known that we needed THC support, particularly a commitment to adopt the path.

Shortly before the bid was due to go in we were told that a very high construction specification would be needed in order for TECs to agree to it. Because this specification did not meet the funder's criteria for low carbon embodiment it was decided to delay the bid. Correspondence with Cllr. John Laing (Chair TECs) and Neil Gillies (Director TECs) plus the offices of Cllr. Hamish Wood has since resulted in a letter from THC indicating that it may be in favour of adopting a path of more standard rural specification, i.e. the standard familiar to us on many Sustrans paths.

A revised application was submitted at the end of August. Funding for design and cost specifications is now being sought. We will hear in November whether the bid has been successful.

G.C.

### **Area HCC representatives:**

**Easter Ross:** Ron Stewart (See p.2)

**Badenoch and Strathspey:** Dick Langridge (See p.2)

**Isle of Skye:** Jim Towers 3, Carbost Mor, Carbost, Isle of Skye IV47 8ST  
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## **TRAVELS WITH A SCORPION IN THE HIGHLANDS.**

*With a title like that you would expect a sting in the tale. Not so!*

In June 2009 I enjoyed a 330 mile journey in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland on board a Velotechnic Scorpion fx recumbent tricycle, with no discomfort whatsoever, a big improvement on the painful posterior, numb hands, stiff neck and creaking knees of recent bicycle touring. The machine itself is no featherweight at around 20Kg, but has rear suspension, disc brakes, inherent stability, 24 gears and a flag. It also folds to go in the back of a car. For half of the trip I was carrying a full camping load.

I had time to enjoy the trip in a leisurely manner. Until the appropriate muscles are developed, the Scorpion with a load is not fast, but it is fun. The only limit to distance in a day is time. Not once did I stop for a rest or because of discomfort. I stopped to admire the view, take a photo, eat, visit a point of interest, socialise or sleep. Some days I covered more than 40 miles. The fairing deflects headwinds and the worst of the weather. Having spent many years helping campaign for improved cycling infrastructure in the Highlands, I was keen to do a proper journey, taking in some improved routes.

I felt quite an adventurer, leaving the familiarity of Alness High Street and heading West along the Ballachraggan Straight with its tarred cycle path, part of NCN1. Between Struie junction and Evanton I stuck to the quieter road, but passed 5 cyclists and two pedestrians on the untarred woodland path, which attracts mountain bikes, families and pedestrians. I followed the High Road to Dingwall without any problem, keeping to NCN1. The Station Tearoom made a convenient refuelling stop. I had no bother keeping to the pavement as far as the Maryburgh Roundabout and joining the excellent new tarred cycle path up to Tore. This is proving very popular, not just with commuters to Inverness, but with local cyclists and pedestrians. A fitting memorial, and a tribute to those who campaigned for it. I crossed the main road before Tore and enjoyed the little byway to Kilcoy and Redcastle, where residents and visitors were sitting sunning themselves in Mediterranean weather. Fish and chips in North Kessock fortified me to find my way via the Kessock Bridge and the A96 cycle route to Smithton and my bed for the night. There I had to do some fine tuning on the SRAM hub gear changer, the only mechanical glitch of the trip.

Day two was wet, but I stuck to my plan of being mindful of previous inhabitants of Northern Scotland by visiting the Clava Cairns, in the company of an Indian family who were intrigued, making the comparison with contemporaneous cultures in India. After the pull up the hill past the wonderful railway viaduct, I deserved the bacon sandwich and coffee at the Culloden Visitor Centre. I found it a rather uninviting place after the bustle of the previous Centre. It's a long road from Culloden



to Whitebridge, but I was entertained by Rockness in the distance. I spoke to two people. One a dog walker whom it had taken me two miles to overtake! The other a born again evangelical concerned about my spiritual survival. The main excitement was crossing the A9 at Daviot. (Ed. You missed the underpass via Lairgandour farm!) I pushed the trike a short distance on the verge to avoid the rushing traffic, so incongruous with the pace of the day, where soaring kites were the fastest moving objects. Whitebridge Hotel was full for Rockness, but I had a wonderful meal at a bargain price. This fuelled me for the pull uphill before rushing down past the Glendoe construction site to the new campsite at Fort Augustus where an army of midges awaited.

Next day, Sunday, I had planned to cycle along the Canal towpath, but awake and refreshed at 6am, I decided to risk the A82 as far as Laggan. The road was quiet and the sun was up. I was soon through Invergarry and leaving the A82 to take the forest track on the north side of Loch Lochy. After some ups and downs, the tarred road ends abruptly at a seriously steep hill with a loose gravel surface. Inevitably I had to push the trike up this. The rest of the route, which keeps fairly close to the lochside, has a reasonable surface and only one further really steep hill. There is one area signposted for wild camping but level ground is scarce even here. At Clunes the tarmac is rejoined at a lovely stream and picnic area. I followed the B road to Bannavie. The Canal bank is a pleasant alternative, down Neptune's Staircase. I pitched the tent at the excellent campsite behind Lochaber High School, before cycling into Fort William by the unpleasantly busy main road. On the way back I discovered the superb, though inadequately signed cycle route, from the High Street to the Victoria Bridge over the River Lochy.

Next day I cycled by that route to the old pier, hoping to take the ferry to Camasnagaul. Alas, it had broken down. I had been reassured that the trike could be carried, but wonder how it would be loaded. For the second time I was approached by a born again evangelical concerned about my soul! Personally more concerned about my safety, my choice was somehow to go down the notoriously dangerous A82 to the Corran Ferry, even by taxi, or reach the other side of Loch Lhinnie by heading North and West round the head of Loch Eil. I was feeling so energetic that, after breakfast at NevisSport, I decided to go the long way round. The 'Road to the Isles' was not too busy, and fairly flat, so I made good time in spite of torrential rain for which Fort William is rightly famous. The single track road on the south side of Loch Eil is level, quiet and delightful. I stopped for 'afternoon tea' at the Community Café at Camusnagaul and had a great chat with the volunteer historian dispensing freshly made pancakes, and two German cyclists. It was their third summer cycle tour in Scotland and they were loving it in spite of the rain. Most of the customers at the café that day had been cyclists. I was soon at the Ardgour Hotel which some years

back did not have a great reputation. It proved warm and welcoming. I was taken aback to hear 'Riverman' being played in the bar, The barman said he could have a change from 'hoochter teuchter' music with the boss away, and Nick Drake was his choice. I had an excellent meal and left in good spirits, the rain having stopped. I visited childhood haunts where I had swum while on holiday with my parents, then turned onto the Kingairloch road. I had wanted to follow this route, which features in RL Stevenson's 'Kidnapped', most of the rest of which I have walked or cycled. I was almost immediately faced with a steep hill I had to push the trike up, but at the top was rewarded with a perfect area for a wild camp, out of sight of the road, with a cool breeze keeping the midges away and panoramic views in front and behind. I made a neat camp and settled on my reclining armchair with a good book and a miniature of 'Dalmore'. My restful slumber was disturbed only by heavy breathing of an enormous beast outside the tent. Enquiry next morning reassured me it was only the bull, which had a bad leg and was waiting to be put down!

My objective for that day was a 7pm dinner rendezvous at the White House Restaurant in Lochaline with my wife and our cycling 'mentor', Alex, who previously recorded his experiences on a Scorpion in the HCC Newsletter. I thought the day would be a doddle. Big mistake. It proved to be one of the hardest days of the trip, with two very long hills. Initially it was pleasant by the sea, talking to motor campers and men restoring an old cottage on the Kingairloch Estate. The restaurant at the big house was only open at weekends, so I existed on biscuits and cheese. There was considerable evidence of regeneration on the estate. At the summit was an incongruous sight; a little cottage with a stunning location was surrounded by dozens of wrecked vehicles and agricultural machines. In several pens were beagles, 'rescued' from disbanded hunts and noisily spending their retirement. I was weary and hungry when I eventually arrived at the 'Dive Centre' at Lochaline. I had an excellent lunch at 3pm (in the Highlands!) and checked into our bunkhouse before meeting up with Sandra and Alex who reckoned that the hills on the main road they had followed were even steeper. Dinner was wonderful and sociable.

The next day was a 'rest day'. After breakfast at the Dive Centre, we caught the ferry to Fishnish and cycled the few miles to Craignure, near the 'Torosay' of Stevenson's Kidnapped. We enjoyed a genuine Costa Coffee in the café at the pier, before sailing in the rain to Oban. There is a propensity for the elderly to believe that places are never as nice as they were in the 'Old Days'. Oban was nicer! It was bustling, full of tourists, clean, smart, with excellent shops and restaurants. We loved it.

Our Hebridean adventure started with a memorable MacBrayne's breakfast, after which we settled back to enjoy the cruise to Barra via Coll and Tiree. Oh no, not in June! There was a force 8 gale, the sea decidedly lumpy, the sky leaden and the rain steady. Blessed are the stabilisers. We struggled up the pier on Barra to be

met by two Alness neighbours about to rejoin their stormbound yacht after doing their shopping at the Co-op! Our bunkhouse was full of interesting characters, from fiddling divers to Irish students of Gaelic dialects. The Kismul Café hand-dived scallop pakoras and monkfish, cod and tuna curry were unexpected delights; the relentless rain of no importance.

Our 'Island Hopper' ticket directed us to the wee ferry to Eriskay rather than the big ferry to Lochboisdale, so next morning we headed North on Barra past the 'Airport' to the ferry slipway. There was quite an air of prosperity, with shellfish obviously the main export. On Eriskay we had lunch in 'The Politician', the pub named after 'Whisky Galore' fame. It was head down for the rest of the day as we progressed North on South Uist, wondering what Island Life is like. Eventually we all met up at 'The Dark Island' Hotel on Benbecula for yet another excellent meal. Following this was homebaked scones and cakes for supper at our B&B where we heard tales of the Lords of the Isles, the Monastery and Nunnery that were on Benbecula, and the dozens of bottles of whisky from The Politician which are still secreted on the Uists, lost to memory.

Next morning the Ministry of Defence houses looked dreich in the rain as we pedalled past on our way to the west coast of North Uist. We found another community café which served a great selection of food for lunch, and was cheerful and busy. These community ventures seemed quite a feature of the islands. Unfortunately the weather did not encourage us to stray from the road to explore the history and wildlife, and we were glad to reach Berneray Youth Hostel via the recently built causeway. These two thatched cottages attract travellers of all sorts to come back repeatedly to enjoy the peace and the atmosphere.

We left early next morning, Sunday, to catch the ferry to Leverburgh. There were eight cyclists and one car (belonging to a disabled driver who had stayed at the Hostel) on the ferry. Breakfast was coffee from a vending machine. Each island has its own traditions of religion. We were surprised that the ferry ran on Sunday; Leverburgh was certainly closed. The road to the West of South Harris has some of the finest beaches. We appreciated them even though it was still raining much of the time. Tarbert provided us with an excellent B&B and first class lunch and dinner. The bicyclists explored the hilly road to Hushinish, while the tri(ck) cyclist had a read.

Another day brought another ferry, this time to Uig, not at its best in the rain. The long hill from the port gave plenty of time for contemplation, but by the time we reached Portree, the sun was out and the square looked quite festive and colourful. Lunch over, the bicyclists looked for a difficult road to Sligachan while the tricyclist was happy to keep to the main road. The long ascents are no bother on the recumbent tricycle. Progress is more sedate, but the 24 gears mean that a steady cadence

is easily maintained without discomfort or fatigue. Sligachan is one of our favourite places. Midge likes it too. The bar delivers interesting and excellent food and the atmosphere is always exciting, with climbers, walkers and bikers for starters. Incongruously, Wimbledon, drenched in sunshine, was on the telly. The bunkhouse was cheap and cheerful.

The road from Sligachan to Broadford has poor sightlines, and can be busy. I decided to leave at 6am to avoid traffic. There was little, apart from a flurry of white vans between 7 and 8am and school buses heading to Portree. Breakfasted in Broadford, we all arrived in Kyle in time for the midday train. The bikes entrained, but the trike was left in a garage warehouse, to be collected by car next day.

This enjoyable trip emphasised to me that a recumbent trike can provide easy, entertaining transport in all weathers and terrains and can accompany conventional bicyclists on holiday.

P.S. This article complements Alex Gilmour's in the January 09 Newsletter. Alex has now completed nearly 11,000 miles on his Scorpion Trike, and can now ride it as fast as a conventional touring bicycle.

P.P.S. I have since enjoyed a ride from Alness to Fort William via Kingussie on the trike. We managed to get two trikes and a bike on the Camusnagaul Ferry, thanks to the strong Ferryman. The Community Café at Camusnagaul is in danger of closing due to the retirement of the aforementioned baking historian. Any takers?

JDSC

#### Abbreviations Used in Newsletter

AT	Active Travel	LA	Local Authority
ATAG	Active Travel Advisory Group	RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
CO	Cycling Office	SCF	Scottish Cycle Forum
CTC	Cyclists' Touring Club	SG	Scottish Government
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise	TEC	Transport, Environment Services
NCN	National Cycle Network	THC	The Highland Council

### **HCC MEETING**

The next meeting of the HCC will take place on  
**Thursday 19th November 2009**  
 at the  
**Spectrum Centre, Farraline Park, Inverness**  
**6-8pm.**