

# Spokes

## Written Submission

The Committee has already taken considerable evidence on this important topic, and we are therefore very brief on issues which have already been covered. However some other issues have received less coverage, notably active travel to local stations from nearby communities, where there have been very serious failures.

### 1. Introduction - responsibilities

If the government is serious about its wish that 10% of all trips in Scotland should be by bike in 2020, up from 1%-2% now, then one essential ingredient is to ensure that cycling is fully integrated into all policies and departments, notably within all sections of Transport Scotland.

We believe that the government's active travel team does its best in this regard, within its available budget and responsibilities, but that integration of active travel is far from complete elsewhere in Transport Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The examples below demonstrate this clearly in respect of rail infrastructure.

It is all very well for the blame to be passed to Network Rail and/or to local authorities, as sometimes happens, but the bulk of the funding for rail infrastructure developments usually comes via Transport Scotland, and therefore Transport Scotland must take the ultimate responsibility.

Incidentally, we are aware that Transport Scotland has been relatively pro-active in relation to cycling integration in the *operation* of Scotland's rail system, particularly in the new franchise, but that is not the point of this letter, and is presumably a different section of Transport Scotland.

### 2. Immediate cycling access to stations

Major issues in the Edinburgh area include the following...

- (a) **Waverley** – Pedestrian and cycle access from Waverley Bridge. The dreadful arrangements here, together with the absence of stakeholder consultation, have been widely covered in evidence to the Committee, so we will not go into the details. However further information can be found in this article<sup>2</sup> on our website. A tweet<sup>3</sup> in which we drew attention to the Committee's Inquiry attracted 21 retweets.
- (b) **Haymarket** – In designing this major new station – which is excellent inside – zero consideration was given to cyclist access, which therefore entails much more interaction with traffic than should have been the case. On a related point, neither was the opportunity taken to incorporate a Bike Hub (with

---

1 Non-integration of cycling within Transport Scotland – see page 7 of Spokes Bulletin 122 and page 7 of Spokes 118, both at <http://www.spokes.org.uk/bulletin/>

2 'Fortress Waverley' Spokes article <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2014/07/fortress-waverley/>

3 'Fortress Waverley' Spokes tweet <https://twitter.com/SpokesLothian/status/592480634855137280>

maintenance, spares, information, etc) and, unbelievably, even basic adequate bike parking was omitted, meaning that other organisations such as the Council and Sustrans have to put together cash to make up for Transport Scotland's failing.

- (c) **Edinburgh Gateway** – Access to this new station for pedestrians and cyclists from the city entails crossing the very busy A8. The design therefore incorporated an underpass of the A8 – **but** a design intended for walking only, rather than to allow cycling without dismounting. This is shocking in the design of a completely new facility. Thanks to a mix-up within the Council, the design was given planning permission, against the advice of transport officers. However, the real blame clearly lies with the initial design and those responsible for the design and the funding. Incidentally, we understand that at this very late stage discussions are taking place as to whether cycling can somehow be incorporated – any help which the Committee can give would be valuable!

### 3. Access to stations from nearby communities

The examples in (2) above are all very localised and can be to some extent overcome by individual cyclists, albeit with some inconvenience, by dismounting, crossing busy traffic, mixing with pedestrians, and so on. However, an even worse case of non-integration is the failure to provide safe and pleasant access to stations from nearby communities.

New stations are connected to the road system, and car parking provided. However, whilst bike parking is usually provided, little or no attempt is made **as an integrated and funded part of the project** to ensure that the new station is linked by active travel means to nearby towns and communities. Instead, Transport Scotland effectively disowns responsibility, leaving it up to local councils and Sustrans to fund and provide whatever they can, even if this means no decent walk/cycle access, or a wait of several years until funds can be found. Both recent rail re-openings demonstrate this, as summarised in (a) and (b) below. Non-integration such as this means rail users building up habits of car commuting to the station rather than having an active travel option from the outset.

An even more fundamental point is the *location* of new and reopened stations. Locations sometimes seem to be chosen for car access in preference to location close to town centres where active travel access would be the more natural access mode. An example is Eskbank, where the original station was near the town centre but the new one is further away.

- (a) **Bathgate-Airdrie** – The pre-existing cyclistroute along the track bed was replaced as part of the project [though even this is still incomplete – e.g. the missing bridge at Armadale]. However, walking and cycling links from stations to nearby communities were not included. This affected walk/cycle access to the new railway from towns including **Seafield, Blackburn, Whitburn, East Whitburn, Harthill, Armadale, Blackridge** and even

**Bathgate.** The problems are described in a document<sup>4</sup> we prepared at the time. Subsequently several local communities have campaigned for the missing links and West Lothian Council and Sustrans have gradually put together funds to start providing them, but 5 years after the line reopened there is still more to be done.

- (b) **Borders Railway** – There has been some learning from the Bathgate-Airdrie experience, in that the issue of cycle access to stations from communities has been discussed between the various parties involved, and some funding has been found at an earlier stage by the council, Sustrans, etc. However the fundamental issue has remained – walking and cycling connections to the new stations are not an integrated and funded element of the rail project and rely on other bodies who have to balance such routes against their many other budgeting priorities. For example, it has just been announced that a bid from Midlothian to Sustrans to build a pedestrian/cycle route to the new **Newtongrange** station has succeeded. The bid was of course in competition with other bids from across Scotland, and so a cyclist route bid from some other council will have lost out. And had Midlothian's bid failed, then this pedestrian/cycle access to the new station would not have been built, at least in this financial year.

This issue has concerned Spokes ever since the Bathgate-Airdrie project, as can be seen from an article<sup>5</sup> we wrote in January 2013 on the Bathgate-Airdrie and Borders rail reopenings.

In conclusion, all future station and rail openings and re-openings should ensure...

- ◆ Station *locations* wherever possible to be in or close to town centres, so that active travel is the natural access mode
- ◆ Active travel connections from local communities to stations to be *funded and built* as an integral part of the project.

We hope these points will be of use to the Committee, and look forward to your report.

**Dave du Feu, Spokes lead organiser**  
**Ewan Jeffrey, Spokes bike-rail representative**  
**5 June 2015**

---

4 Bathgate-Airdrie absence of active travel station access  
<http://www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/1110-Peter-comment-for-website.rtf>

5 Spokes article Jan 2013 on non-integration <http://www.spokes.org.uk/2013/01/airdrie-bathgate-admission/>