

SUSTRANS SCOTLAND

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

About Sustrans Scotland

Sustrans Scotland works in partnership to make smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We are a leading charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, statutory bodies, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

Sustrans manages funds on behalf of Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government; we release funds through a number of matched-funding initiatives such as I-Bike, which aims to get more children walking and cycling to school, Active Travel Champions, which does the same for adults in the workplace and Community Links, which constructs improved facilities for walking and cycling in partnership with local authorities and statutory agencies across Scotland.

In 2015/15 Sustrans is managing £20m in funds and is generating £23m in matched funding from grant recipients thus creating a £43m spend across Scotland.

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1 Headlines

- We thank the Committee for inviting us to provide comment. We acknowledge that the Committee has received a lot of feedback on the topic and will therefore restrict our evidence to examples of good and bad practice with conclusions and recommendations.
- Sustrans has been concerned about access to stations for many years and in this paper we will acknowledge the positives, where things are improving, and highlight to the Committee issues and areas where more can be done.
- Getting into and out of a station should be a simple and straightforward matter. In the same way the ability to make a journey by foot and bicycle to your local station should also be easy, there should be a well signed walking and bicycling network and a place to stand or sit and lock your bike. This is, however, not always the case; it can be difficult to find your way to a station, streets around stations can be very busy with vehicle movement making it hard to cross for pedestrians and challenging for those on bicycles. It is widely recognised that a sense of danger on our streets does much to convince people that getting around for journeys of fewer than 5 miles by bicycle is not a realistic option.
- The Scottish Government rightly wants more people to leave the car and opt for public transport and, for short every-day trips, walk and cycle. In addition, one-third of Scots does not have access to a car and therefore rely on walking, public transport and cycling. So accessing stations really is an important element in society.

2 Challenges to accessing rail stations: examples

Haymarket: this is perhaps the best example where a number of factors combined to create a station that is hard to access and where facilities for those arriving by bicycle are poor.

Despite the interior of the new building and concourse delivering a huge improvement on the previous station there appears to have been no effective liaison between Network Rail, City of Edinburgh Council and the, then, trams company so that the approaches to the station for pedestrians are just as they were before: narrow pavements that are crowded at peak times, particularly rush hour. In addition for those on bicycles there are places for only a handful of bikes to be locked, these cycle hoops are always over-subscribed and the added discomforts of tram lines on the roads around the station make this area very challenging for cyclists.

How could this happen when millions of pounds of public money was spent upgrading the station? The answer seems to be that Network Rail draws a 'red line' around a station development and only focuses on what happens within that line. In other words it circles the wagons and what happens outside is beyond their concern and up to the local authority. Unless the local authority can access funds to improve the public realm around the station it will remain as it was before the building was improved.

In the case of Haymarket it was unclear what role or influence the train operator had in planning how their patrons got to the stations.

It has subsequently become clear that cycle parking was not part of the EGIP programme that funded Haymarket Station. With the Scottish Government clearly committed to the shared vision of 10% of trips being made by bicycle by 2020 we recommended that the basement of the station would be given over to the type of high quality bike park so common in other Northern European nations. These facilities have secure parking, workshops, showers, lockers, etc. This development did not happen although its potential remains. In a bid to provide some mitigation for the lack of bicycle parking Sustrans, City of Edinburgh Council and Network Rail are spending new money constructing a much improved bike park outside the station, see appendix 01.

Waverley: like Haymarket, this station also underwent a major overhaul and is much improved, particularly the roof. However, the pedestrian and cycle access to Waverley is very mixed. While the escalators, the improved 'Waverley Steps' and access at Market Street are excellent access for bicycles has been effectively halted by the erection of barriers from Waverley Bridge. This results in those arriving by bicycle having to walk their bikes into the station among pedestrians all squeezing along narrow pavements running down from Waverley Bridge. This could all be halted by re-instating the previous barrier system thus preventing access by unauthorised motorised vehicles, allowing access for deliveries and allowing pedestrians and cyclists a share of the road. The availability of parking for bicycles is improving inside Waverley but could be so much better both in terms of location near to platforms and quantity of spaces.

Queen Street: access to this station is poor for pedestrians and people on bicycles. Parking for bicycles is limited and the streets and pavements around the station are busy. This has all been acknowledged and a plan is being developed to re-design the station building. While we welcome this development we have grave concerns that the planned facilities for people arriving at the station on bicycle are non-existent although a large multi-storey car park is a key element. This will not help to de-populate the area around the station of cars.

But of more importance to those arriving by bicycle there does not seem to be a plan that includes easily accessible parking for bicycles. Indeed a series of meetings with Network Rail to highlight this issue have not resulted in any improvements to the plan. An obvious solution to the location of cycle parking was discussed with Network Rail in April, this was to set aside space in the shopping area proposed for the ground floor of the multi-storey car park and thus create the Northern European 'bike hub' already referred to at Haymarket; but to date this idea has not been developed because, we have been told, the space is in the ownership of Network Rail (Commercial). At the May meeting with Network Rail we were informed that we all need to return to the plans and start the process of locating a space for bicycle parking again, we earnestly hope this will open up new thinking. We have already proposed ideas for Queen Street and are prepared to build on these, see Appendix 02.

In all three examples above, we are forced to ask when public funds are being used to develop a public facility the needs of those arriving by foot and bicycle appears to be an after-thought or to get lost between Network Rail and the Local Authority.

3 Positives to accessing stations: examples

There are a number of positives which do indicate an improving approach to surface access to stations:

- Sustrans was referenced in the Scotrail tender, for which we were grateful and because of which we were able to meet all the tenderers and get a good understanding of their thinking around access to stations for pedestrians and people on bicycles.
- Since winning the tender there has been close collaboration with Abellio Scotrail on their Cycle Innovation Plan. See appendix 03. We are impressed with Abellio and their approach, experience and plans. They seem to genuinely be customer-focused and want to improve the experience for those arriving at the station on foot and by bicycle.
- The proposal to group the management of rail under one CEO with a director for Scotrail and a director for Network Rail is good and hopefully heralds better liaison and collaboration.
- We have an improved relationship and rapport with the civil servants looking at Rail within Transport Scotland. They are assisting in identifying opportunities to utilise Scotrail and Network Rail investment in stations to match fund against our Community Links funding. See appendix 04.
- We are building relationships with Community Rail Partnerships and using these to identify desired access to stations improvements.
- The successful bid to the Scottish Stations Fund for cycle facilities at Haymarket (appendix01) is a positive, though costly retrospective development and we hope to present more partnership bids in the future.
- Border Line: while these are not major urban stations and so out with the scope of the Committee's enquiry, it is worth noting that through the initiative of the Network Rail project sponsor we have been fully involved in surface access to stations on the Borders Line. Regular site visits and meetings with Network Rail have led to partnership investment to develop Community Links Projects with Midlothian and Borders councils, see Appendix 04. This is a huge improvement on the experience when the Airdrie-Bathgate line was re-opened and we were prevented from being able to help address surface access issues.
- While we are deeply worried at the current plans for Queen Street we acknowledge that we have been consulted.
- The Bike Hub at Stirling Station is a good example of a Transport Scotland funded, community-led facility and has much to offer in terms of advice and future development.

4 Conclusions

The approach of Network Rail drawing a 'red line' around a station development and only concentrating on what happens within the station stops a 'whole station' approach from developing whereby the urban realm around the station and the routes into it are left to the local authority with no funding available. Only close liaison between the station developer and the local authority will help address the needs of those walking and bicycling to the station, consideration for these users should extend for up to 5 miles from the station in the case of those using bicycles. Streets leading up to Stations should be traffic calmed and made 20mph.

Network Rail need to do much more to attend to the needs of patrons who arrive at a station with a bicycle. From the experience highlighted above it appears that new stations are being constructed and/or designed with little regard to parking a bicycle. This seems to us to be at odds with a nationally agreed aspiration that 10% of every day trips will be made by bicycle by 2020. This lack of planning can clearly be seen in Edinburgh where, already with 8% of commuting trips being made by bicycle, bike parking at Waverley and Haymarket is over subscribed.

5 Recommendations

We encourage the Committee to recommend that:

1. Where stations are being improved, re-designed or created Network Rail must take the approach of considering the journey to the station that will be taken by all patrons beyond the 'red line' of the internal station development, particularly those on foot and bicycle.
2. That funding for a station should extend beyond the 'red line' and into the walking and cycling trip to the station with improvements delivered in partnership with the local authority.
3. In terms of 'low hanging fruit': we recommend the Committee ensures that access to Waverley for those arriving with a bicycle should be improved immediately, that a basement bicycle hub for Haymarket should be planned to deal with future patronage and that plans for Queen Street need to be re-evaluated to create a similar facility in or close to the station.
4. Overall, we recommend that the Committee acknowledges that a change of culture is required in rail in Scotland to better consider, plan and provide for access to rail stations.

6 References & Appendices

References:

City of Edinburgh Council, 2010. Active Travel Action Plan.

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/1414/active_travel_action_plan

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http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/hands_up_scotland_2013_national_results_summary_embargoed_until_30_05_14.pdf

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<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/system/files/documents/statistics/j333840.pdf>

Transport Scotland, 2013b. Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.
<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/report/j0002-00.htm>

Transform Scotland, 2014. Interchange Audit Report
<http://transformscotland.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Interchange-Summary-Report.pdf>

Appendices:

Appendix 01: Sustrans application to the Scottish Stations Fund for improved cycle parking at Haymarket. Emailed attachment sent to the Committee (link below).

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/scotland/policy/Haymarket-SSF-Application-web.pdf>

Appendix 02: Sustrans response to Queen Street consultation. Emailed attachment to the Committee (link below).

http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/scotland/policy/Sustrans_Queen_Street_Consultation_Response_final.pdf

Appendix 03: Abellio Scotrail Cycle Improvement Plan. Emailed attachment to the Committee.



Appendix 04: Funding for Access to Stations projects in 2014/2015 Sustrans Community Links project:

Partner	Project	Allocated CL Funds
Argyll & Bute Council	Active Argyll: Project 1. Strategic Link - Scotrail	140,000.00
Midlothian Council	B6392 Dalhousie Road - Footpath Widening (NCR1)	50,000.00
Scottish Borders Council	Borders Rail 1 - Tweedbank Drive to New Rail Station	72,500.00
Scottish Borders Council	Borders Rail 3 - Winston Road	35,000.00
Scottish Borders Council	Borders Rail 6 - Kilknowe Caravan Park	33,000.00
Scottish Borders Council	Borders Rail 4 - Low Buckholmside	26,000.00
Scottish Borders Council	Borders Rail 2 - Galafoot Link	20,000.00
Stations fund	Haymarket	£160,000.00
Total		£536,500.00