

In this transport special issue:

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Transforming Edinburgh

The breakthrough by the Greens and the Socialists on May 1st will mean that the mainstream parties will have to raise their game on a range of environmental and social issues. One area where the Scottish Parliament has failed over the past four years has been in delivering a more sustainable transport system. The new radical MSPs in the Parliament will certainly have plenty of ammunition in tackling the impasse in improving Scotland's transport.

To this end, the South East Scotland Transport Activists Roundtable (SESTAR), a coalition of Edinburgh's environment, transport and civic groups, have launched a manifesto for sustainable transport in the city, "Transforming Edinburgh." This has been sent to all Edinburgh councillors, and all the new MSPs, to tell them what needs to happen to sort out the city's transport.

With March's announcement that £375 million will be made available for two tram

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Edinburgh's compact size makes it ideal for foot and bike journeys.

Picture: Sustrans

Co-ordinator's Message

Hello! It's Katriona here; this month it is the pleasure of the vice-coordinator to keep you all up to date with the group's activities!

For the past month the group have once again been focused on the recent elections, with our public meeting on 24th April entitled 'A manifesto for the environment?'. See Velda's report on page 6 for more details.

Regarding the proposed project to encourage recycling in Edinburgh's pub's and bars - we have suffered an unfortunate setback. The application for funding submitted to Edinburgh Environmental Partnership (EEP) earlier in the year was rejected, despite the fact that EEP was specifically set up to fund projects that tackle local waste issues. Decisions about whether or not to drop the project will be taken at the next waste campaign meeting on the 14th May.

This meeting will be a brainstorming session to discuss the aims and objectives of the campaign and everyone is welcome!

On a brighter note, FoEE released the report and

Katriona hard at work !

results of our Edinburgh Councillor survey (see last issue for details) the day before the elections, in order to focus attention onto the issues of recycling and mass-burn incineration at election time. The article entitled 'Cross-party backing for kerbside recycling in city' was published in the Evening News on 30th April.

Katriona Harding

More details: www.edinburghnews.com/edinburgh.cfm?id=492522003



Picture: Colin Hattersley

Transforming Edinburgh

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lines in Edinburgh, it seems that at last some money is to be made available for new public transport infrastructure. Yet there remains much work to be done to improve the service quality of existing public transport, with better enforcement of bus priority, better information and ticketing, and better physical accessibility all highlighted.

Perhaps more critically, SESTAR highlight the slow progress on traffic calming, cycle networks, conditions for those on foot, and the quality of the urban realm. Most journeys are very local, with half of all

journeys less than two miles in distance. Edinburgh's compact city form should make the city ideal for many more journeys to be made on foot or by bike. It is therefore heartening that the victors in the local elections - Labour - have made commitments to cross-city traffic calming. Yet more action is still needed on all these other issues.

Fundamentally, progress must be made on congestion charging. Experience from around the world demonstrates that successful city transport strategies need improvements in public transport to be accompanied by road traffic demand

management measures, such as congestion charging, parking controls or access restrictions, in order to “lock in” the benefits. Public transport investment alone cannot tackle the problem of too much road traffic.

Yet for this to happen, politicians are going to have to come out of hiding. At a national level, the roads lobby has been given a free ride to parade their distortions because of the reluctance of Scottish Executive Ministers to advocate the case for congestion charging. In Edinburgh, while the city’s transport leader, Cllr. Andrew Burns, has done his best to present the need for traffic restraint, too many councillors have not made plain their support for the city’s sustainable transport plans.

In particular, it will be instructive to see if Edinburgh’s Liberal Democrats, ever willing to proclaim their reputed environmental credentials, are prepared to be more constructive. It does little for their national party’s credibility on the environment when their local party has done its best to undermine a policy, congestion charging, aimed at reducing environmental impact.

The Lib Dems, in their political opportunism, have allied themselves with the Tories. Yet the political incoherence of the Tories on transport is perhaps best exemplified by their position on congestion charging. It is remarkable that a party that has often styled itself as a “party of the market” should be so opposed to a market-based economic instrument. The reality is that the Tories and other roads lobby opponents of road user charging are unable to offer any credible alternatives for controlling traffic growth.

May’s election results suggest that people want to see government take on board the more progressive agenda that the new pattern of voting has flagged up. Politicians of all colour now have it set out in the ‘Transforming Edinburgh’ document what they must do if they want to receive the support of Edinburgh’s transport and environment lobbies.

Colin Howden

‘Transforming Edinburgh’ is available on the web at www.transformsotland.org.uk/sestar



Online for tram cash - but more needed for better bus services

Picture: TRANSform Scotland

Scotland’s Transport “In Reverse”

In April 2003, TRANSform Scotland published “In Reverse”, a detailed critique of the Scottish Executive’s transport policy. The report looks at the 1999 manifesto promises of the coalition partners – Labour and the Liberal Democrats – and asks, “Did they deliver?”

The short answer is no. The report makes it clear that promised policy, and implementation of that policy, are two very different beasts. Although both Labour and the Liberal Democrats had made manifesto commitments to improve transport in Scotland, they largely failed to deliver. Whatever happened to integrated transport? The report’s conclusion is that the Executive’s policies have instead led to disintegrated policies on transport.

So what went wrong?

In our analysis of the commitments made by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, it becomes clear that, once in office, the Scottish Executive did deliver on certain of their pledges, including enabling legislation for road user charging. Around a third of the manifesto commitments were delivered in full, and another third to some degree of success. There was also a significant additional commitment to stabilise road traffic levels in Scotland.

What is of more concern however is that Labour and the Liberal Democrats also adopted the discredited Tory road-building policies. This is something that the Tories themselves recognise, to the extent that in their 2003 election manifesto they congratulated the Executive for re-instating “the Conservative roads programme.”

Labour and the Liberal Democrats would

argue that they have increased funding for public transport. This is true – it would have been hard to invest less than their Tory predecessors at the Scottish Office. Yet it was understood that the defining characteristic of Labour and Liberal Democrat policies after 1999 would be that they would prioritise sustainable transport investment over the failed Tory policy of “predict and provide” road-building. This, however, has not been the case. Instead, we have a policy of “more of everything.” Certainly there has been more funding for public transport yet traffic-generating and environmentally-destructive road-building still dominates. There now appears to be little chance of the transport sector contributing to, rather than undermining, the Executive’s climate change commitments.

Our study of the Executive’s commitments and delivery on transport policies was made unnecessarily difficult by a lack of transparency in the presentation of statistical materials by the Scottish Executive. This is a problem that the Executive should strive to remedy as soon as possible. We can only have open and accountable government if the information presented is coherent, consistent, and accessible to all.

All carrot and no stick

A major flaw in the Executive’s implementation of its sustainable transport policy is that it relies too much on “all carrot and no stick.” This may keep the electorate happy in the short-term but will ultimately fail to resolve the major problems caused by allowing traffic to continue to grow. Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats promised to take action to implement measures to make road users pay for their external social and environmental costs. This is simply the application of the “Polluter Pays

Principle." Yet despite introducing legislation that will allow local authorities powers for road-user charging, the Executive itself has done nothing to ensure implementation.

Edinburgh is the only local authority in Scotland currently considering the introduction of road-user charging. It is perhaps instructive of the mood of transport decision-making in Scotland that a proposal aimed at reducing pollution and congestion should be deemed necessary to be dependent on public referendum, while major road-building projects such as the M74 get bulldozed through with the minimum of consultation. With the success of London's implementation of the congestion charge in February 2003 perhaps it is time for the Edinburgh's Labour administration to have the courage of its convictions.

Where do we go now?

There are four main aspects of the recent approach to Scottish transport policy where we see a need for substantial change:

1. There needs to be a fundamental review of the executive's civil service staffing on transport, with a major shift of emphasis away from road-building resources to public-transport, walking, cycling and freight on rail and sea.
2. The transport debate must become more sophisticated, with a shift away from mega-projects favouring the already highly mobile to more basic accessibility to key day to day services and facilities.
3. There is a need for better formal scrutiny of transport, given the lack of transparency of Executive presentation. Scotland lacks the checks policy formulation and implementation that England enjoys

through the House of Commons' Transport Select Committee and Environment Audit Committee, and the Commission for Integrated Transport.

4. Choices will have to be made about what should get priority for scarce financial resources. Currently this is heavily skewed towards unsustainable programmes that will worsen existing transport trends. The dominance of infrastructure projects risks



Picture: Tatjana Schneider, GLAS

neglecting "softer" issues such as public transport service quality, buses, walking, cycling and local quality of life issues.

Conclusion

The first four years of the Scottish Parliament have set back hopes for a more environmentally and socially just transport system. The Executive has put in place a £1 billion trunk road-building programme, thus reinforcing the environmental and social damage caused by Scotland's over-reliance on private cars and road freight.

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Labour stated in their 1999 manifesto "Our biggest challenge is to create a high quality, accessible and affordable public transport system." It is clearly an embarrassment to the Executive that the largest transport project in Scotland is an elevated urban motorway – the M74 Northern Extension across South Glasgow, planned to cost £375-500 million. This project was instigated without an independent analysis of the alternatives being carried out. It will increase traffic congestion and pollution levels in the city, and can do nothing but harm to the majority of households in Glasgow (59%) that have no access to a private car.

While TRANSform Scotland does not have any party political allegiances, it is particularly heartening that two parties

Green or Grubby Grey - The Party Manifestos

At our last public meeting, we heard that the Liberal Democrats had fared surprisingly well in an analysis – by FoE Scotland - of the environmental soundness of party manifestos for the recent Scottish elections. They did not do nearly as well, however, in an analysis of their commitment to sustainable transport presented by Colin Howden of TRANSform Scotland.

The FoE Scotland Analysis

In the FoE Scotland analysis, presented by Dan Barlow, the Lib Dems scored 8/10, second only to the Green Party with 9/10. In this analysis the manifestos were rated against a set of criteria including environmental justice, sustainable development, climate change, transport,

(Greens and Socialists) that have policies on sustainable and socially just transport gained an increase in representation in the new term. The challenge for the new coalition will be whether it will continue with the same failed Tory prescription of "predict and provide" road-building or whether it is prepared to make the hard choices necessary to deliver a less environmentally and socially damaging transport system.

Sharon Gardner is a researcher with the sustainable transport campaign TRANSform Scotland.

In Reverse is available in PDF format to download at <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/InReverse.pdf>. A printed copy is available to order for £10 from TRANSform Scotland, 72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh. EH6 5QG; info@transformscotland.org.uk or tel 0131 467 7714.



Critical analysis from Colin Howden

Picture: Colin Hattersley

waste and agriculture. Dr Barlow made it clear that the analysis related only to the manifestos, not to the policies put in place over the last four years by the Scottish Executive. The SNP and SSP manifestos tied on 5/10 with Labour on 4/10 and the Tories on 0/10. Dr Barlow was surprised by the Labour Party claim that they would like to see 40% of Scottish energy coming from renewables by 2020. He wondered if this was a typographical error, where 'energy' was substituted for 'electricity'; the former would mean a much greater commitment to renewable energy.

The TRANSform Scotland Analysis

In Colin Howden's analysis, the Green Party again came out on top with 80% while the SSP were in second place with 63%. All of the other parties received failing scores, with the Liberal Democrats on 40%, Labour on 23%, the SNP on 15% and the Tories at the bottom again on 13%. Colin was highly sceptical of Labour and Liberal Democrat commitment to sustainable transport, given the poor track record of the outgoing Scottish Executive. Referring to the Liberal Democrats, Colin commented that, "frankly, I don't trust them."

Putting the manifestos into action?

Now that it appears likely that we will again have Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition it will be interesting to see the extent to which their somewhat contrasting manifestos are put into action. For example the Liberal Democrats claimed that they would, "grant Third Party Rights of Appeal in planning cases...", whereas Labour did not make any clear commitment in this area. The Liberal Democrats also "oppose plans for any new nuclear power stations in Scotland." Again the Labour manifesto does not make any



Picture: Colin Hattersley

Analysing the manifestos - Dan Barlow

such promises. It will be exciting to see the impact of the tremendous success of the Green Party in securing 7 seats. The influence of the 6 SSP MSPs will also be of interest, given that both of our speakers rated their manifesto quite highly.

Velda McCune

For more information on the FoE Scotland analysis see: www.FoE-Scotland.org.uk/press/pr20030401.html

For the TRANSform Scotland analysis see: www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/HeadingInRightDirection.pdf

Make Contact

If you'd like to get involved in the work of Friends of the Earth Edinburgh then please email us - info@foe-edinburgh.org.uk or see www.foe-edinburgh.org.uk. For those without access to email you can call Jolin Warren on 0131 466 8329.

We'd also be keen to hear any ideas or comments you have about the events and campaigns organised by the group.

Next Public Meeting - Urban Community Renewables

Our next public meeting will look into whether Edinburgh could help kickstart a renewable energy revolution. On the **22nd of May**, two representatives from the Castlemilk Community Urban Wind Farm Steering Group will come and talk about the proposed wind farm for Castlemilk in Glasgow, and the many positive effects projects like this could bring to urban communities across Scotland. This project is unique in that it would be the country's first urban wind farm and is being led not by some major electricity company but by the people of Castlemilk themselves. There will be the opportunity for discussion on all types of urban renewables, and community based projects.

Margo Smith and Caroline Gallagher, on behalf of the Steering Group, will tell us about their plans to establish a community run wind farm which the people of Castlemilk will own and control. Energy generated from the turbines will be sold with the profits being re-invested into the community. The group aims to integrate the use of renewable energy in the overall

objective of local regeneration using four principles: sustainable development, participation and community involvement, environmental justice and capacity building.

For more information on the project, a recent article can be found at <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/lo/news/5013280.html>

Meeting details:

Urban Community Renewables:
Power to the people - by the people
Thursday 22nd May 2003, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace (off George IV Bridge)
The meeting is free to attend and open to everyone.

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh's Comedy Night

Saving the planet isn't all serious, worthy stuff. Friends of the Earth Edinburgh cordially invite you to an excellent evening of high-class silliness at The Stand Comedy Club, the city's renowned palace of comedic pleasure.

A positive orgy of comic talent will be unleashed on **Tuesday 15th July**, with top comedians from around the globe.

And for those of you who may feel embarrassed by so much fun, please be assured that the evening has a very worthy cause - the very serious purpose of raising hard cash for FoEE's planet-saving activities for the next year.

Past shows have been total sell-outs - so get your order in as soon as possible.

Tickets £6 (£5 concessions) from The Stand, York Place, Edinburgh.
Tel: 0131 558 7272