

2022 // 2023

Ambassador for Active Travel

Final Report 2022 - 2023

// BY LEE CRAIGIE

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The Scottish Government has committed to spending at least £320m or 10% of the total transport budget in 2024-25. With this increase in funding, Scotland requires a corresponding step-change in social norms and attitudes towards active travel, a paradigm shift in all of society through enhancing knowledge and understanding of, and appreciation for, the multiple benefits of regular physical activity, according to ability and at all ages. It was thought the role of an independent Ambassador for Active Travel might help achieve this shift.

Between June 2022 and September 2023 I worked two days per week as Ambassador for Active Travel; an independent of government public engagement role that focused on championing diverse and inclusive participation in active travel and active travel decision-making. This was deemed of importance so as to ensure the Scottish Government takes the public with them in shaping the green transport revolution they have committed to deliver.

My objectives were to provide a strong, trusted, and impartial voice and take a lead on broadening and deepening the public conversation on active travel. While an increase in active travel will positively impact our health, wealth and climate, of these three benefits, I chose to focus my attention on how our well-being stands to gain, and social inequalities stand to be reduced, by embracing active travel measures.

“ With this increase in funding, Scotland requires a corresponding step-change in social norms and attitudes towards active travel ”

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I did this by:



1. Exploring creative, inclusive and engaging ways of broadening and deepening the public conversation on Active Travel in Scotland.

1. Providing a link between Transport Scotland's Access to Bikes Team and relevant specialist stakeholders (in particular young people and people from poorly represented communities who might benefit the most from having access to a bike) so that policy makers could ensure their solutions were fit for purpose.

1. 3. Acting as a conduit for lesser heard voices to provide an independent and user-based perspective on Active Travel delivery to participants in the Active Travel Transformation Project (ATTP) and give voice to the real-world impacts that the quality of delivery has on people

For a more detailed breakdown of the tasks I undertook, please see part two of this report. My main ambition for this final summary of my role however is to focus on the current state of Scotland's intended shift away from car dependency and towards walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday short journeys. I will also make recommendations, based on opinions comprised of a diverse audience, on how this shift to a healthier, happier, fairer and more sustainable Scotland could be brought about more easily.



In practise this meant:

- Developing communication campaigns to engage a younger / different audience.

- Producing engaging, relatable podcasts, short films and comic strips.

- Developing mutually trusting relationships with small panels of people whose voices would otherwise be hard to hear, to then relate policy proposals to them in plain language before delivering their thoughts and opinions directly back to people in power.

- Holding active meetings where possible and fulfilling my Ambassador responsibilities by travelling only by foot, bike or public transport.

Part One:

Observations of Current Active Travel Delivery in Scotland

Investment in Infrastructure

Time and again, a lack of safe, segregated, pleasant infrastructure is cited as the main reason more people don't use active forms of transport.

The Scottish budget for Active Travel for 2023-24 is currently £189m with a commitment from the Scottish Government to invest at least £320 million or 10% of the transport budget in active travel by 2024-25. There is more money than ever before being put towards how we invest in our shared space in favour of being more active in Scotland but without the will, skill and commitment to work together to achieve a whole systems change approach, this money cannot be spent effectively. There remains a siloed and restrictive approach to spending this money which is impacting upon Local Authorities and their ability to deliver the changes required. Staff capacity, relatively low rates of pay and single-year funding models are most regularly identified as challenges to the delivery of active travel infrastructure projects. Furthermore, our engineers and designers within local and national government are having to adapt from their traditional focus on roads and pavements to integrated, attractive and fit-for-purpose active travel design. We need more specialists from further afield to help up-skill our infrastructure experts in Scotland and strong, united messaging on the importance of this. The biggest challenge to how we move around may be infrastructure based, but without the solutions being developed with people and planet health prioritised, and a willingness to embrace radical reimagining of our public spaces, all the money in the world will not achieve the change we

require. For example, a simple and inexpensive solution to pedestrian priorities could be made by adopting continuous walkways in our towns and cities. Doing so would transform how our streets feel to walk, wheel and cycle but bold leadership is required to make such a change.

Investment in active travel infrastructure goes much further than the design and building of segregated cycle ways. Pleasant and safe conditions to walk, wheel and cycle and an accessible, affordable, integrated public transport system are arguably more important factors in achieving modal shift away from private cars towards active travel. In fact, although important, these measures often overshadow the need to shift the culture within bus and rail.

Since trains have come under public ownership and Covid has shifted how public transport is being used away from commuting and towards recreation, we have witnessed a real shift in the culture of rail in particular to make the integration of walking and cycling easier and fairer for more people. The recent scrapping of peak rail fares, for example, is a welcome step in the right direction but we have a long way to go in Scotland before buses and trains become the affordable and convenient option for traveling longer distances outwith our intercity services. However this shift has begun and changes to new train rolling stock are finally in place to accommodate more bikes, buggies and wheelchairs than ever before. In the meantime, more could be done for rural areas by standardising bus fares, consolidating service providers and including space for bikes, buggies and wheelchairs on intercity services.



Behaviour Change

There are several active travel delivery partners currently working across Scotland to change the narrative around active travel. This cluttered landscape of organisations have all been tasked with promoting walking, wheeling and cycling and are all dependent on funding from Transport Scotland so that they might continue to work with and for communities year on year. These projects and partnerships are under constant threat and scrutiny and many fail when the yearly funding allocations are halted or reduced, meaning teams of experts on the ground move elsewhere to ensure a sense of job security. This lack of commitment to multi-year funding ends up costing us more emotionally and practically when projects are forced to constantly adapt to the precarious nature of funding.

An important aspect of any successful behaviour change initiative is bringing public opinion along in the process. Involving community members in designing the changes proposed to their local area is commonly considered effective community consultation but this model comes with two problems:

1. The people who turn up to a town hall or fill in an online form in answer to a call for consultation on active travel measures will, by necessity, have the vocabulary and confidence to make comment. In Scotland, these people are usually a privileged, white, educated, time-rich section of that community. Typically they will be asked by their local authority what changes they would like to see made to their shared spaces and, although this consultation is open to everyone, only a small demographic ever know a consultation is taking place let alone feel a willingness to attend and help answer questions that have no bearing on the immediacy of everyday existence.
2. By asking people, “what changes to this piece of public space do you want to see?” or “how should we deliver a free bike to every child in Scotland who cannot afford one?” we are asking for answers to a problem that has already been identified and from people who aren’t necessarily experts in project delivery or public service design.

The Scottish Government invests a great deal in outsourcing community consultations and commissioning impact assessments but the kind of co-creation model offered by organisations such as Young Scot, the Institute for Community Studies and Involve are more relationship based, process (rather than outcome) driven, meaningful for participants, engaging of diverse personalities and, ultimately, better value for money.

If we conducted more co-design processes with a randomly selected section of a community and asked those small panels questions that maximised on their area of expertise (i.e. “how do you feel about the place you live?”) then we could come up with a design brief that we could give to the engineers and place-makers to fulfill on behalf of a community.

An example of the effectiveness of this approach can be found in a co-created report by Children in Scotland assessing the effectiveness of the national cycling scheme, Bikeability. Rather than press children to come up with a solution to the adult identified problem of “how do we make more people travel places by bike?” children were given the opportunity to offer answers to the more pressing question of “what makes you want to / not want to ride your bike?”. The answers revealed that many children found the current Bikeability programme restrictive, boring and unintuitive and that if there was more play on bikes as a focus of Bikeability then they would be more likely to become life-long bike riders, eventually (possibly) adopting the bike as a form of transport for short everyday journeys as well as for recreation, sport and nature connection.



Policy and Governance

Currently active travel policy sits under Transport Scotland with a small team responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of the walking, cycling and wheeling agenda. However, this agenda spans Net Zero, Public Health and Social Justice with implications for the Sport, Education and Tourism areas of government too. With the acknowledgement that infrastructure development (which Transport Scotland is well placed to oversee) must run alongside behaviour change measures such as policy, training, education, community growing, skills development and communications campaigns, we must ask the question; is transport the best place to hold all of these essential aspects of the development of active travel? Making the economic, health and social justice case for a population wide shift in the direction of active travel takes time, resource and expertise and within Transport Scotland there appears to be competing and conflicting demands that makes prioritising this messaging, and offering consistent support to community based behaviour change initiatives very challenging. Might it be that the Scottish Government Wellbeing Economy Directorate is better placed to help make this economic, health, PLACE and climate case on behalf of active travel across government portfolios, to encourage a joined up approach to solving this joint health / climate / inequality problem?

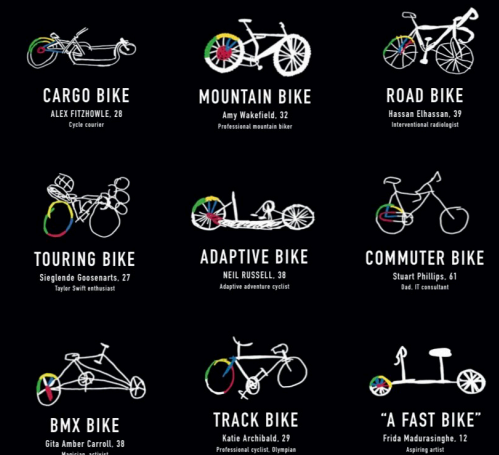
In addition to consideration of where active travel behaviour change sits within central government, is the extent to which each of our 32 Local Authorities and our 7 Regional Transport Partnerships are willing and able to make the necessary changes in their local areas to encourage a modal shift. The recent Verity House Agreement between Scottish Government and Local Authorities sets out the vision for a more collaborative approach to delivering shared priorities for the people of Scotland. This increase in a Local Authorities fiscal autonomy comes with its own risks but without the acceptance and trust that a local government is best placed to deliver vital change for the communities they represent, power will continue to be held centrally and generic change interpreted by communities as being out-of-touch and forced upon them.

Edinburgh and Glasgow each have ambitious active travel initiatives to the value of £40 million respectively that are already underway. Other Local Authorities, to a greater

or lesser degree, are putting in place their own budget of measures that they feel will encourage change to their own unique areas of Scotland. A good example of a Local Authority Area working well across private, public and voluntary sectors can be found in the South of Scotland.

The South of Scotland Cycling Partnership is a coalition of professional partners, national agencies and Local Authorities who represent the views and opinions of thousands of South of Scotland residents, enterprises and visitors and covers a diverse range of interests. This collaborative strategy has a ten year vision: to shape all South of Scotland communities around people and to embed cycling into the daily fabric of the lives of residents and visitors to make cycling the most popular choice for shorter everyday journeys. Driven this way, based on a broad range of policies from central government, the South of Scotland has a unique opportunity to deliver a modal shift away from cars and towards active travel to reach their own health, economic, climate and social justice objectives.

DRAWING BIKES IS DIFFICULT



ENJOYING BIKES IS EASY

BIKES ARE FOR EVERYONE.

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Reflections on the role of Ambassador for Active Travel

The role of Ambassador for Active Travel offered a unique opportunity to break the active travel conversation out of the echo chamber it often finds itself in and to provide a conduit for lesser heard voices into the space where decisions are made. Unfortunately, although recruited to this role as a trusted and authentic voice (i.e. with personal messaging and practical experience of the active travel landscape) I have never felt able or encouraged to use my creativity and initiative to break out of the closed government system in order to help make the change it insists is needed. While I developed some excellent working partnerships with individuals within key delivery partner organisations, I felt that the organisations tasked with active travel behaviour change are part of a cluttered and competitive landscape which is not conducive to collaborative or creative working. It appeared to me that anxiety and defensiveness originating from the precarious nature of their funding situation meant many third sector active travel initiatives were spending disproportionate energy on justifying their existence rather than on collaborative working.

Left to use my own voice and personal messaging to help change the public narrative around active travel was no easy task. In reality, the role of the Ambassador for Active Travel had no administrative support, autonomy or budget of its own to realise the objective of broadening and deepening the public conversation around active travel. Frustratingly, while I witnessed comparatively large sums of money being spent ensuring bureaucratic processes were adhered to, inexpensive, person-centred, creative projects that I believed would better engage a younger or harder to reach audience were drowned in procurement processes or dumbed down to avoid any possibility of debate or controversy. But debate and controversy are the cornerstones of any change making agenda. Doing things the way they have always been done is a tried and tested way to ensure that things stay the same. This was the unique potential of this role but it was hamstrung from the very beginning by its own governance.

On countless occasions it has felt to me (and to others attempting to deliver change in favour of active travel in local government, health, education and through delivery partnerships) that bureaucratic process is inhibiting progress and, just as importantly, devaluing the excellent individuals trying to make the changes we so desperately need. It is my strong opinion that we simply don't have the time or the justification to behave this way any longer.

In my time as Ambassador for Active Travel, I developed and delivered a well-received keynote presentation based on social values to help Transport Scotland and our Convention of Scottish Local Authorities address our health and environmental conundrum. This presentation was based on research conducted by the Common Cause Foundation which revealed that the vast majority of the UK's population identifies more with compassionate values (social equality, environmental protection, the promotion of health and well-being) than selfish values (fame, success, money and status). Furthermore, an even greater percentage believe that our statutory services should be governed by these compassionate values and our country run in accordance with them. In transport terms this would mean more space allocated for people to be active and socialise in rather than it being dominated by roads that predominately move and store privately owned cars. It would mean better air quality particularly in the most deprived areas of our built up towns and cities. It would mean more subsidies to our public transport system rather than continuing to make driving the most affordable option for those who can already afford car ownership. It would mean prioritising pedestrian walkways, enforcing the pavement parking law and restricting the movement of private cars in places where our children live, play and learn. Unfortunately, it is still a well-organised, privileged minority of people from a narrow demographic who are given the broadest platform to express their views and this is undermining the individuals and institutions we know are in the majority and who wish to live by compassionate values. This, in turn, makes those people feel that they are instead in the minority and that upholding their compassionate values is pointless because everyone around them is simply out for themselves. This is why

cultures of selfish values become self-actualising. It is the responsibility of our statutory services and political leaders to make bold, fair, health and environment-centred decisions based on facts and the carefully considered opinions of a broad range of our diverse population, not only the loud and privileged few.

Real transformation in active travel is possible - and I'm delighted that the new Verity House Agreement will give Local Authorities more autonomy to make the bespoke changes their communities need to walk, wheel and cycle more. This, coupled with record levels of funding, mean that we're closer now to achieving our shared vision as a more active nation than we've ever been before. We must continue to be bold and less risk averse if we are to continue on this trajectory. We must finally find a way to join up government agendas and write cross cutting policies in favour of health and environment and at the same time support the incredible grassroots organisations and passionate individuals striving to make our shared public spaces feel like they belong to everyone. And we must do this quickly in order to bring about the change that is so desperately needed for our health, wellbeing and our climate.



Part Two:

AAT objectives outlined and their achievement assessed

- **FreeBikesForEveryChild (FBFEC)** : I have worked closely with Young Scot, Transport Scotland, The Bike Station, Bike for Good, Scottish Cycling, The Bike Club, Chris Boardman and Isla Rowntree to develop a balanced pilot model for sustainable and efficient delivery of FBFEC. Having helped make connections between third sector organisations and possible commercial partners and Young Scot, I stepped back to allow these relationships to develop naturally. With Cycling Scotland now co-ordinating joint delivery of the strategy, Scottish Cycling are developing the delivery of a different model with the joy and play aspects of bike riding at its core. Young Scot continue to represent the views of young people on the Cycling Scotland steering group.
- **Access to Bikes:** Having researched bike share schemes from around the world and cross referenced their sustainability and economic performance with industry colleagues, I have been supporting the pilot that Bike For Good in Glasgow are conducting based on the Paris model and making links with GALLANT. I have linked Bike for Good, Edinburgh City Council and The Bike Station in order to share this learning and in the hope Edinburgh might rectify their lack of bike share scheme. Meanwhile in Edinburgh, a handful of smaller grassroots bike share schemes have required a lot of my support to keep their smaller schemes financially afloat. This grassroots approach to a community demand for access to bikes is a ripe place for learning for what access to bikes initiatives work in a variety of communities.

- **Moving Conversations Podcast Series** : I produced a podcast series in conjunction with Adventurous Audio that aimed to reach an audience outside the active travel echo chamber. These episodes are online and publicly available but the job of getting them out into the public domain must lie with an independent promotion agency and not central government or their delivery partners if they are to reach the audience for which they are intended.
- **Active Travel Cartoon Commission** : I have developed a communication campaign and commissioned a cartoon series to promote active travel in conjunction with artist Teagan Philips. The pilot of this campaign ran in collaboration with the UCI was highly successful with more than four times the organic reach and engagement of any other similar social media post during the Cycling World Championships. More cartoons with similarly engaging messaging which aim to start public conversations on carbon reduction, public health, nature connection, the school run, money saving, train travel and social justice have been designed but the project stalled due to the protracted procurement process and a lack of enthusiasm within central government to attach their name to this alternative messaging campaign. It was my vision that these cartoons be released and promoted online but also in print and advertised on bus stops, school notice boards and on the backs of toilet doors in public buildings in order to also reach a different audience.
- **Transformation Project** : I led on joining up a piece of work between Glasgow City Council, the University of Glasgow and the Institute for Community Studies into key communities in Glasgow for some action research and I amalgamated my co-creation / community consultation ideas into their active travel response.

- **Step Up Session:** I created a talk series for the Scottish Government Communications team and delivered it in collaboration with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society based on create storytelling and active travel which was delivered in Inverness, Stirling and Perth and online to the Scottish Government central communications department.
- **A Values Based Approach to the Green Transition:** My presentation on a values based approach to active travel systems change was delivered across Scotland to all Local Authorities and to the Transport Scotland staff conference. The feedback received was very positive.
- **UCI Cycling World Championships:** I worked closely with Aneela McKenna and Nicola Doig to develop meaningful ways to help implement the Inclusion and Diversity framework that so heavily influenced the delivery of the most accessible and inclusive world sporting championship event I have ever witnessed. I took part in several round-table policy discussions and celebration events throughout the championships and visited many grassroots and school initiatives using the Power of the Bike messaging to inspire, encourage and enable more people to use bikes for health and transport reasons.
- **Bikes on Trains** : I have been part of Scotrail's active travel strategic group chaired by John Lauder in an attempt to make rail more integrated with walking, wheeling and cycling. On departure from this post I have ensured the group is connected to the wider cycling industry and representatives from the accessibility action group Adaptive Riders Collective-CIC. Over the coming years with £2m of funding secured, trains will now have clear branding to highlight which carriages provide bike spaces and which provide wheelchair access. Cycle storage at stations will increase by 1500 spaces, and an audit of Active Travel facilities on the rail network is about to get underway.



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