

## Strategic Arguments for Investing in Cycling in Glasgow

### ***Good for public health***

Active modes of travel such as cycling contribute to regular moderate physical activity: **three** risk factors: tobacco use; poor diet; and **physical inactivity** contribute to: **four major chronic diseases**: coronary heart disease; type II diabetes; lung disease; and a number of cancers causing: **more than 50 % of deaths worldwide**.<sup>1</sup> Physical inactivity is implicated in obesity. The Foresight report estimated that economic costs attributable to obesity at a UK level will rise from £15.8 billion in 2007 to £49.9 billion by 2050 if no action is taken.<sup>2</sup> If we adjust this to a population of the size of Glasgow City, attributable costs for Glasgow were **£150 million in 2007** rising to **£480 million by 2050**.

Glasgow is one of the **least healthy cities in Western Europe**, as measured on a range of health outcome and behavioural indicators. Action to increase the prevalence of cycling in the city will contribute to better population health among those who do cycle, but shifting every day travel out of cars would have wider benefits; reducing congestion and vehicle emissions - **having a positive impact on air quality** - and **improving quality of life in communities**. The importance of clean air for human health is becoming increasingly recognised. In 2010, a UK Parliamentary Committee, concluded that **long-term air pollution**, from PM10s, nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) made **asthma** much worse and **exacerbated heart disease and respiratory illness**.<sup>3</sup> A follow up enquiry published in 2011 concluded that the evidence of the **damage caused by air pollution** had grown stronger. Furthermore it concluded that the **UK was still failing to meet European targets** for safe air pollution limits across many parts of the country.<sup>4</sup> More recently, further evidence has been published linking relatively low levels of air pollution from traffic to **low birth-weight in babies**.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Good value for money***

There is good evidence that **investment in ‘smarter choices’** (travel planning, car-reduction policies, etc), road safety and cycling schemes and public transport represents by far the **best value for money in transport interventions**.<sup>6</sup> Many European cities with similar characteristics to our own Scottish cities have achieved high levels of walking and cycling, through **strong political leadership and investment**.<sup>7</sup> Investment in measures to promote active, sustainable travel have also been cited as a **potential miracle cure**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.3four50.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2011/08August/Pages/half-of-uk-predicted-to-be-obese-by-2030.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmenvaud/229/229i.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvaud/1024/1024.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(13\)70192-9/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(13)70192-9/abstract)

<sup>6</sup>

[https://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/13130/2/Goodwin\\_Transport\\_Committee\\_Transport\\_and\\_the\\_Economy\\_submission.pdf](https://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/13130/2/Goodwin_Transport_Committee_Transport_and_the_Economy_submission.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/civilising-the-streets.aspx>

for health by leading medical experts.<sup>8910</sup> Increased levels of cycling can also stimulate **economic growth and vibrancy** in urban areas through **enhanced connectivity and safer, more attractive public spaces** which are not dominated by vehicular traffic. Many UK and European cities have invested in measures to encourage and promote walking and cycling and have experienced visible increases in both.

In Glasgow, the health economic benefits of cycling have already been illustrated locally through a HEAT analysis conducted by GCPH<sup>11</sup>, which estimated annual health economic benefit accruing from cycle trips into and out of Glasgow city centre in 2012 was over £4 million.

### ***Good for safety***

Although all age traffic related casualties and deaths are declining in the UK, child pedestrian injuries are still the leading cause of death and injury in 5 to 14 year olds. For pedestrians involved in a vehicular crash, **10% are killed at 20 mph, 50% are killed at 30 mph, and 90% are killed at 40 mph.**<sup>12</sup> Two thirds of all crashes where pedestrians involved are **killed or seriously injured** occur on roads with a **speed limit of 30 mph or less.**<sup>13</sup> If, as a society, we continue to accept a 30mph limit in most built up areas then, by default, we are accepting a **50% fatality rate** for pedestrians involved in a crash assuming drivers are **adhering to the 30mph limit** rather than exceeding it.

A UK House of Commons Transport Committee report, published in October 2008, concluded that:

*“Road accidents are the largest single cause of death for people between the ages of 5 and 35 in Britain and road accidents cost our economy some £18 billion each year. The number of deaths and injuries on roads far outweighs the deaths and injuries in other transport modes, and should be viewed as a **major public health problem.**”* Its recommendations included a call for **more 20mph speed limits.**<sup>14</sup>

Scotland performs less well than England and Wales in its child pedestrian road safety record with higher yearly rates of injury and death. Both the UK and Scottish Government have issued a call for the **introduction of more 20mph zones in residential areas.** One of the Glasgow Health Commission recommendations is that Glasgow City Council should introduce **mandatory 20mph zones in residential areas**, especially those near schools.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk/data/files/resources/269/Active-Travel-The-Miracle-Cure.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/resources/in-the-news/free-range-kids-campaign-coming-soon>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.transformsotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=108>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/431\\_findings\\_series\\_37-cycling\\_is\\_good\\_for\\_health\\_and\\_the\\_economy](http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/431_findings_series_37-cycling_is_good_for_health_and_the_economy)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.swov.nl/rapport/Factsheets/UK/FS\\_Speed.pdf](http://www.swov.nl/rapport/Factsheets/UK/FS_Speed.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/adviceandinformation/driving/speed/inappropriate-speed.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons Transport Committee. Ending the Scandal of Complacency: Road Safety Beyond 2010. Eleventh Report of Session 2007-08. London: TSO, 2008.

There is good evidence that the introduction of **mandatory 20mph zones is more effective** in reducing vehicular speed and road casualties than 20pmh speed limits or advisory 20mph zones e.g. '20's plenty' signage. Research published in the BMJ in late 2009, examining the effect of the introduction of mandatory 20mph speed zones on road injuries in London between 1986 and 2006, found that their introduction had led to significant reduction in road casualties. There was a **50% drop in the number of children killed or seriously injured**. The **reduction of casualties among cyclists** was also greater in **children and in cyclists killed or seriously injured**.<sup>15</sup>

Recent analysis undertaken at GCPH has highlighted **rises in cycling casualties** among adults and children **in Glasgow** in the last 6/7 years.<sup>16</sup>

### ***What works?***

Despite increases in commuter cycling into Glasgow in recent years, the most recent cordon count showed effectively **no real increase in cycling over the previous year**. **Without sustained investment in better infrastructure it is unlikely that further substantial increase in cycling levels will be seen**.

A recent consultation in Scotland identified **four key factors** that could encourage more people to cycle: **better routes; drivers giving more space to cyclists; restricting parking and traffic-free cycle routes**.<sup>17</sup> In Glasgow, cycle routes are often disjointed and of variable quality. For example, cycle routes used for commuting often alternate between good quality shared (walking and cycling) paths to on-road (shared with buses, cars and HGVs). This type of variable infrastructure may suit the brave and experienced cyclist, but safety is an issue for many potential cyclists and this type of route is a barrier for many.

The cycle strategy map developed by Glasgow City Council and Sustrans is a step in the right direction but does not (yet) encompass a clear vision for an integrated cycling network in the city. A network needs to be **defined, costed and planned for in a strategic manner**. It is likely that such a network would require **substantially greater investment** than is envisaged within current plans. This is where a **bold vision needs to be supported by strong leadership** - see examples below from other European cities.

**More concerted action to reduce vehicle speeds** will reduce road crashes and their severity and will encourage more people to cycle. Glasgow has proposed the introduction of **mandatory 20 mph zones** and these are to be welcomed. Integrating cycling and path development with the introduction of effective speed control initiatives will assist in creating a **safer, more integrated transport infrastructure for the city**.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.bmj.com/content/339/bmj.b4469>

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/transport/road\\_casualties/adult\\_road\\_casualties/cyclists\\_and\\_pedestrians](http://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/transport/road_casualties/adult_road_casualties/cyclists_and_pedestrians)

<sup>17</sup> [http://cyclingscotland.msol.org.uk/Uploads/1281438902\\_Focus\\_20groups\\_20report.pdf](http://cyclingscotland.msol.org.uk/Uploads/1281438902_Focus_20groups_20report.pdf)

### **Commonwealth Games legacy**

There has a great deal of discussion and debate about creating a lasting legacy of improved health and wellbeing as a result of the Commonwealth Games. Intelligent and well-thought out investment in cycling infrastructure in the city has the potential to provide a **sustainable lasting legacy** of increased physical activity among Glasgow's citizens, but will require **substantial, sustained funding** over a number of years beyond 2014 to achieve this outcome.

*Post-Games addendum: The Next bikes cycle hire scheme appears to have been a great success. Detailed figures on usage have still to come out but what is known is that over 6,500 are members of the scheme, more people are using the bikes during the week than at the weekend - suggesting commuting use - and the scheme is set to be expanded into the east and south of the city. Detailed analysis of who is using the scheme is required but it appears that this scheme could have lasting public health benefits for the city.*

### **Lessons from other places**

The lessons from other cities are that **strategies are not enough**. [Civilising the Streets](#) (Transform Scotland, 2010) investigated sustainable transport in 13 European cities similar to the size and geographies of Scotland, exploring how social, political, geographical and cultural conditions have led to 'best practice' and brought **about high rates of walking and cycling**. The summary messages from this report were that the key ingredients of success were **visionary leadership** (both from politicians and officers), **sustained investment over several years** and **pedestrian and cycle-friendly zones** taking priority over motorised transport schemes. The report also noted that **any initial resistance to investment in active travel was overcome** once changes were in place and the public could see the benefits of this investment and were **supportive of further investment**.

In Gothenburg, a city of similar size to Glasgow, **10% of commuting journeys are by bicycle**, the city has a **770km of total cycle paths, 470km of segregated cycle paths** and **7,400 spaces for cycle parking** in the city centre. There are additional plans to redevelop the city centre to give even greater priority to bicycles and to reduce the traffic speed.<sup>18</sup> In Gothenburg, planning infrastructure for active and sustainable travel is an integral part of their **holistic approach to developing a people-friendly city whilst protecting and enhancing the environment**. We think that Glasgow has enormous potential to do the same.

### **Bruce Whyte, Fiona Crawford**

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4050/Going\\_back\\_to\\_Gothenburg.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/4050/Going_back_to_Gothenburg.pdf)