



Strategy team, East Renfrewshire Council.

Council Offices, 2 Spiersbridge Way  
Spiersbridge Business Park  
Thornliebank, G46 8NG

PO Box 15175, Glasgow, G4 9LP

e-mail: [consultations@gobike.org](mailto:consultations@gobike.org)  
web: [www.gobike.org](http://www.gobike.org)

By e-mail to: [ldp@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:ldp@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

Ref: TF/SI/ET/TW

08 December 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Local Development Plan 2 for East Renfrewshire. GoBike, the Strathclyde Cycle Campaign, works towards a vision of cycling being a safe and easy option for travel for all ages and abilities, across the Strathclyde region. Many of us who are members of GoBike live, work or travel by bike in East Renfrewshire and this response was compiled by GoBike members who live in East Renfrewshire and who also attended the Consultation Event on 21 November in Giffnock, where they spoke to Council representatives. We would be delighted to follow up on any of the points raised and to contribute further to engagement events and ongoing planning processes taking place locally.

We begin by setting out the evidence underpinning our response and the key challenges for transport and land use for East Renfrewshire, before moving on to the specific proposals made by the LDP2.

### **Background to our response**

We welcome the document's stated aspirations to ensure that East Renfrewshire is a thriving, attractive and sustainable place to live, work, and visit, and to move towards a low carbon place and economy. In the context of the global climate crisis, which the United Nations described in September 2018 as a "direct existential threat" on which we are nearing the point of no return [1], it is critical that these aspirations are realised. Given the severity and urgency of the climate crisis and the lack of meaningful action to date, this must be the overriding priority in decision-making around land use and strategic planning at a local as well as national level, in keeping with the Scottish Government's declaration of a climate emergency [2].

Active travel is an essential part of meeting this challenge. GoBike is very supportive of the document "Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland", see: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/designing-streets-policy-statement-scotland/> and we know that some local authorities are actively working towards its implementation. Transport is the biggest single contributor to climate change in Scotland, accounting for 37% of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 [the most recent year for which data are available; [3]. Emissions from this sector - including those from cars - have been steadily increasing in recent years [4]. The government's independent advisory body, the UK Committee on Climate Change, has identified the need for "much more action" on road transport if Scotland is to address the climate crisis [4].

The Scottish Government's target, downgraded to an aspiration, of 10% of all everyday journeys to be made by bike by 2020 has not been met, due to a lack of understanding of the challenge and commensurate investment in, and planning for, strategic networks that enable cycling to be safe, appealing, and accessible to all.

Increasing active travel also has enormous potential to contribute to other goals outlined in the document, such as improved connectivity, efficient use of land, enabling residents to be healthy and active, and supporting local businesses. For instance:

- Studies have consistently found that improving infrastructure for walking and cycling can significantly reduce traffic congestion [5].
- Transport policies and urban planning systems that promote walking and cycling have been identified as two of the seven 'best investments' for increasing physical activity in the population [6]
- Investing in walking and cycling makes good financial sense. Every £1 spent on active travel yields an average of £13 to £19 of benefits. In contrast, most road schemes provide £2 or less for every £1 spent [7].
- People who walk and cycle take more trips to their local high street over the course of a month, and walking, cycling, and public realm improvements to local high streets can increase retail sales by up to 30% [8]

At present, levels of active travel in East Renfrewshire are low - even lower than the Scottish average, which is itself much lower than most European countries (including those with similar weather) [9] Note that Copenhagen, where the weather is very similar to Scotland, has remarkably improved the levels of cycling in recent years through taking very positive steps to encourage active travel and reduce the number of cars in the city. Only 3.7% of people cycle to work regularly, and only 0.3% of secondary pupils cycle to school [9]. Why is this the case, given statistics also show substantial unmet demand for cycling? For instance, 34% of households in East Renfrewshire have access to one or more bikes; 41% of journeys within the local authority are under 5km (a distance easily cycleable by most people, especially with the rise of e-bikes); and 100% of primary schools provide level 2 Bikeability training [9]. We know from surveys in nearby areas and nationally, that more than a third of people would like to be able to travel by bike but don't feel able [10]. The answer is that uptake is hindered by a lack of safe protected infrastructure (which, as described below, is the key determinant of whether or not people choose cycling as a means of transport) and the existing dominance of motor traffic in the area. This is the result of planning decisions which have consistently prioritised the needs of car users over other forms of transport.

Equalities considerations are also an important motivator for enabling better active travel through infrastructure. Reducing demand for car transport through better active travel provision will free up space on the roads for those who have no alternative but to drive, such as those with disabilities or other limitations, and will improve the timeliness and reliability of the bus network, which is an important means of transport for those unable to drive or who do not own a car. We would also draw your attention to the fact that protected cycling infrastructure can also directly benefit people with disabilities, as documented by the Wheels for Wellbeing charity's "My Cycle, My Mobility Aid" campaign [11].

The existing evidence shows that high levels of active travel and public transport use depend on:

- **Compact, dense, and diverse developments** which are easily accessible on foot or by bike, and which restrict the access and speed of motor vehicles.
- **Good physical infrastructure** in the form of well-maintained pavements meeting accessibility standards and cycling infrastructure which is physically separated from motor traffic (e.g. by kerbs, planters, or other barriers).

- Good examples of the latter, which have been retrofitted to existing roads, include Glasgow City Council's South and South West City Ways and the Sauchiehall Street element of the wider Avenues project.
- It is important to note that the evidence indicates that painted lanes do not provide the real or perceived safety that is required to support widespread uptake of cycling as a means of transport, and in some cases can make the situation worse (as is currently the case with the A77 painted lanes, which put people on bikes at high risk of being hit as people in parked cars open their doors).
- **Timely, reliable, accessible, and cheap public transport** with good connectivity to other forms of travel.

We strongly advocate that these evidence-based principles inform the LDP2 and its implementation.

### Specific proposals made by LDP2

With regard to the specific proposals within the plans,

- We support the mentions of active travel *infrastructure* - as described above, physical infrastructure which separates people on bikes from motor traffic is the key factor in achieving the modal shift that is described in the LDP2's aspirations. Currently there is very little infrastructure in East Renfrewshire that will encourage people to cycle and we suggest that a start is made on the major cycle commuting routes into Glasgow on the A77 and into the towns of East Renfrewshire. Such protected cycle lanes will not only allow people to get to their work without using the car but will encourage people to cycle into the local town for school, shopping or leisure trips.
- We support the mentions of active travel *networks* - the connected aspect of a network is crucial in ensuring widespread uptake of any cycling infrastructure. Without suitable connectivity, there is a risk that uptake is low and that projects are seen as 'white elephants'. As in the point above, a cycle route must be inclusive, allowing people to reach a variety of destinations, such as a railway station and a library or school. We particularly welcome the prospect of a new railway station at Barrhead South and look forward to walking and cycling routes to the station being predominant over driving routes.
- We welcome the mention in D4.9 (Netherlee master plan) of improving active travel links between Netherlee, Stamperland and the Primary School, given the high proportion of children who are currently driven to school in East Renfrewshire. The railway line in this area forms a barrier to active travel, encouraging car use and a new bridge over the railway will make it feasible for people of all ages to walk and cycle in this area. Extending this to include other key routes and other schools is critical in providing safe opportunities for children to be active every day.
- We support the proposals (albeit somewhat vague and tentative) for new active travel routes and safer streets alluded to throughout Schedule 6, and would like to see these expedited. Particularly important are those which provide greater connectivity to key 'journey generators' such as Williamwood High School (D8.9) and between shopping and residential areas (e.g. D8.13).
- However, we are concerned that the proposals indicate a focus on leisure at the expense of a modal shift towards walking and cycling as means of transport. Key arterial routes which provide direct transport for commuting, school runs, shopping, and other everyday activities (such as the A77) are notable by their absence, yet are currently responsible for a large proportion of journeys by car. For instance, the plans for active travel routes to Dams to Darnley Country Park, long-distance routes between Eaglesham and Darvel, and other rural connecting routes are to be welcomed, but are unlikely to achieve the levels of behaviour change that are aspired to elsewhere in the plan.

- It is also arguable that the documents' proposals for electric car charging infrastructure are stronger and more specific than those for active travel infrastructure. While electrification of private vehicles has some role to play in decarbonising transport and minimising the harms of air pollution, it is no substitute for true modal shift in keeping with the sustainable transport hierarchy (as cited by the document on page 69). While a wholesale change to electric vehicles will reduce (but not eliminate) pollution from motor vehicles it will do nothing to reduce congestion or to encourage people to use a bike. We would therefore invite the Council to raise their ambitions in relation to active travel and to avoid perpetuating the car-dominated status quo.
- We understand from the document that there are plans to update the Council's Active Travel Plan - we would support this taking place as a matter of urgency and would be happy to provide whatever support we can to the development of a plan commensurate with the Council's ambitions for the area.

GoBike looks forward to working with East Renfrewshire Council in a constructive way to improve the active travel network and transform the travel patterns, and health, of as many residents as possible.

Yours sincerely



Tricia Fort  
for Consultations, GoBike

## References

1. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1018852>
2. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-climate-emergency-scotlands-response-climate-change-secretary-roseanna-cunninghams-statement/>
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2017/>
4. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2018-progress-report-to-parliament/>
5. [http://h2020-flow.eu/uploads/tx\\_news/FLOW\\_REPORT\\_-\\_Portfolio\\_of\\_Measures\\_v\\_06\\_web.pdf](http://h2020-flow.eu/uploads/tx_news/FLOW_REPORT_-_Portfolio_of_Measures_v_06_web.pdf)
6. <http://www.globalpa.org.uk/pdf/investments-work.pdf>
7. <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=91553>
8. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/walking-cycling-economic-benefits-summary-pack.pdf>
9. <https://www.cycling.scot/mediaLibrary/other/english/6353.pdf>
10. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/bike-life>
11. <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/campaigning/my-cycle-my-mobility-aid/>