

## Highlights of 2019 Cycling Scotland conference by Hugh McAninch

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> November 2019 Murrayfield Stadium

Over 230 delegates attended the annual conference over a two-day period.

With national and international speakers, workshop sessions, study tours and an evening awards ceremony, the conference brought together professionals from the active travel, health and third sectors, campaigners, local authorities, civil servants, politicians, volunteers and consultants to discuss how we can make cycling in Scotland easier, safer and more accessible.

Although I did not attend the first day of the conference it kicked off with three study tours exploring what Scotland's capital is doing to encourage walking and cycling. Edinburgh City Council hosted a workshop discussing the Street Design Guidance while a walking tour visited the Innocent Railway Tunnel, the Meadows., which is involved in the Cycling Friendly Campus . At the same time, some enjoyed a visit to The Bike Station where - they learnt about the services provided including teaching bike maintenance courses, adult cycle training, and upcycled sustainable products.

The second day which I did attend with Katherine Melville Chair of By-cycle had a packed agenda of speakers, with a welcome to the city from Councillor Adam McVey who outlined Edinburgh's vision for active travel and underlined the importance of courage and leadership to make change. Continuing this theme, Sue Flack, former Director of Planning and Transport at Nottingham City Council, outlined the bold steps Nottingham took to become the first city in the UK to implement the workplace parking levy.

Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson, thanked the active travel sector for its work, and highlighted how cycling, walking and public transport services are central in making the transformative change needed as we face one of the biggest challenges for our society: climate change.

Delegates were then welcomed to the Slovenian city of Ljubljana by Tjaša Ficko, Deputy Mayor responsible for implementing the European Green Capital project and putting Ljubljana on the map as a city committed to the green vision. She shared their interventions, electric tourist trains, dedicated lanes and city ambassadors, that have helped change citizens' travel behaviours.

In the afternoon, delegates chose from breakout sessions discussing how cycling impacts on a range of policy areas, hearing presentations on how cycling can tackle inequalities, and exploring how Edinburgh is encouraging active travel.

I attended two of the breakout sessions

1. Active Nation Commissioner's Role and Activities - Lee Craigie, Scotland's Active Nation Commissioner.

*Lee gave an impressive and interesting talk of her role and answered any questions.*

2. Road Safety: Give Cycle Space Campaign - Denise Hamilton, Head of Communications, Cycling Scotland.

*Denise spoke about the campaign in detail and showed a video of the need for motorists to give space and invited questions or comments.*

*She explained that the majority of motorists are not aware that driving too close to cyclists can result in three penalty points.*

*A poll of more than 1,000 Scots found 73 per cent did not know the potential consequence of failing to leave at least a car's width when passing.*

*Cycling Scotland, which commissioned the research, is raising awareness of the risks to cyclists in a new campaign.*

*Police Scotland has launched Operation Close Pass to make roads safer for cyclists. The initiative sees plain-clothes officers cycling with a cameras on their bike. When they are passed too closely by a car, the cyclist radios details to colleagues further up the road, who pull over the motorist.*

Lastly, Bill Scott from the Poverty and Inequality Commission was our afternoon speaker, sharing his insight on the links between poverty, climate change and transport.

Conference chair Pat Armstrong, CEO of ACOSVO, closing the event with a summary of key themes of the day.

**Conclusion - I found the day extremely interesting and also enjoyed walking round the different exhibition tables - I was surprised but impressed at the number of different cycling organisations and charities and the valuable work they do.**

I thank Katherine and By-cycle for financing the day to allow me to attend.

Hugh McAninch

By-cycle Member