CAPS PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION FACILITATION

Summary report

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Prepared for:

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1   Introduction

1.1   The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) is being developed to provide a long term strategy to get more people cycling more often across in Scotland. In 2008, Cycling Scotland, which is leading the process on behalf of the CAPS board, commissioned Steer Davies Gleave to carry out a range of research and consultation to inform the development of CAPS. This report sets out a summary of work done and draws together the key findings from the exercise.

1.2   The research and consultation exercise can be summarised as having been intended to address two central questions:

I   "Why do people currently not cycle (more)?" (The actual and perceived barriers to cycling)

I   "What would encourage people to cycle (more)?" (Interventions which people say would encourage them to cycle)

1.3   The exercise was deliberately designed to reach a range of audiences using qualitative and quantitative methods, to capture both those who currently cycle and those who do not. The component activities are listed below:

I   Background research

I   Focus groups

I   Telephone survey

I   Web survey

I   Paper-based survey (at public events)

I   Facilitated "meet the Board" discussion groups (at public events)

I   Recorded interviews in 'big brother' style 'diary room' (at public events)

I   Facilitated workshop break-out sessions (at the Cycling Scotland conference on 7th October 2008)

1.4   The various activities and their results are reported in detail in a set of "daughter" documents:

I   Background research report

I   Focus group report

I   Report on telephone, web and event surveys (including the "meet the Board" summaries as an appendix)

I   Conference findings report

1.5   The 'diary room' footage has been edited and is held by Cycling Scotland.

2   Summary of activities

Background research

2.1   The background research was motivated by a concern that delivering the things people say would encourage them to cycle will not necessarily result in more cycling. A modest piece of research was therefore carried out addressing two areas of inquiry:

I   What the world of behavioural psychology can tell us about how behaviour change comes about; and

I   In locations where significant growth in cycling has been achieved, what appear to have been the reasons.

2.2   The research principally took the form of a literature review, supplemented by a limited number of interviews with relevant stakeholders.

Focus groups

2.3   Eight focus groups were conducted (in Edinburgh, St Andrews, Fort William, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dumfries, Pitlochry and Stornaway). The locations were chosen to provide a geographic range (urban, peri-urban and rural – mainland and island), and to capture permanent residents, students and tourists.

2.4   The participants of each focus group were recruited on the basis of a detailed quota sheet designed for that location. The intention was to achieve a balance of backgrounds in each. Regular cyclists were not recruited; nor were those who said they were "not at all" interested in cycling.

2.5   The discussion guide used in the focus groups started with the general topic of travel before cycling was addressed in detail. Participants were asked to consider their attitudes to cyclists and cycling and to speak about arguments for and against cycling.

Surveys

2.6   The **telephone survey** was designed to capture the opinions of a representative cross-section of Scottish householders, using a sample drawn from across the country. During the interview, householders were asked about their level of cycling, their views about it and the measures that might make cycling more attractive to them. A total of 811 interviews were carried out.

2.7   The **event survey** took place at the four public events organised to raise awareness of CAPS in the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. At the events, passers-by were asked to complete a short questionnaire (covering much the same ground as the telephone survey). The majority were handed in at the event, a small number being posted in subsequently. A total of 1,756 completed questionnaires were received.

2.8   The **web survey** operated on Cycling Scotland's website for a period of several weeks in late summer and autumn 2008. Various partner organisations included links to the survey on their own websites. The form of the survey was very similar that of the event survey. In all, 1,272 people completed the web survey.

"Meet the Board" events

2.9   In addition to the paper survey and "diary room" options at the public events, visitors were also invited to participate in a series of moderated discussions involving members of the CAPS Board. The discussions ran for up to an hour and were not dissimilar to the focus groups, though they were less structured in form and tended to attract people with an active interest in cycling.

Cycling Scotland Conference

2.10   The annual Cycling Scotland conference was dedicated in 2008 to the subject of CAPS and much of the day was given over to discussion sessions involving the nearly 150 delegates present. For the first session, delegates were able to express a preference for the topic discussed. This led to 43% attending a discussion of 'Cycling and the Built Environment', 33% attending 'Methods to Promote Behaviour Change' and 24% attending 'Culture and the Individual'. The second discussion session addressed the topics of targeting and segmentation with delegates being encouraged to think constructively about the groups or journey types that deserved particular attention as part of CAPS. The third and final discussion session dealt with prioritisation of effort, with delegates debating the potential value of a range of types of intervention, ranging from infrastructure to legislative change.

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3 Key findings

Introduction

3.1 The deliberate attempt to reach different audiences and the use of different research and consultation methods have meant that the results collected in this exercise are inevitably disparate. The telephone survey, for example, reached many people who are clearly "non-traders" in the sense that they are far from being ready even to consider riding a bicycle. In contrast, the web survey, being placed on the Cycling Scotland website, was bound to attract existing cyclists, with an emphasis on the truly keen. Meanwhile, the Cycling Scotland conference is an annual event targeted at people working in fields directly related to cycling, the majority of whom understand the subject because they work with it daily. This disparity is a good thing because CAPS will need to cater to the interests of all constituencies. But it presents challenges in terms of distilling the findings into a set of over-arching messages. As the discussion below shows, there are some common themes across the audiences engaged; equally, there are some very interesting contrasts amongst the views of contributors and these differences of opinion too must inform CAPS.

3.2 The discussion of findings below is structured in accordance with the two questions posed at §1.2.

The characteristics of respondents

3.3 Those who participated in the surveys were asked a number of questions concerning their travel habits. Regularity of cycling unsurprisingly varied with survey type: 28% of phone survey participants said they cycled once or more per week, compared with 55% in the paper survey and 65% amongst web survey respondents. The purpose of cycle journeys was more uniform across the three audiences, with 33% of phone survey respondents saying they cycled for leisure on-road (23% off-road); similar numbers were obtained from the web and paper surveys.

"Why do people currently not cycle (more)?"

Safety

3.4 Safety is clearly the single most significant concern to have arisen during this consultation and research exercise:

l   Existing cyclists cite safety worries as a reason they do not cycle more;

l   Non-cyclists name safety problems as the principal reason they do not cycle;

l   Stakeholders know of old that this remains the biggest obstacle to overcome in achieving cycling growth.

3.5 Various specific concerns were voiced by those participating in the discussions and surveys. Some are troubled particularly by the volume of traffic, whilst others find speed a greater concern. Many refer to inconsiderate driver behaviour and others

speak of a lack of road space. But these are all facets of the same basic concern: that there is too great a risk of collision between a relatively fast-moving metal object and the far more vulnerable rider.

Culture

3.6   Cycling is not *normal* behaviour in Scotland. Not only do relatively few practise the activity but, and perhaps much more important, there is a distinct perceived schism between the cyclists and the non-cyclists. Remarks made during the focus groups help to show that cyclists are considered different (and sometimes in a very negative sense). It is important to note that these remarks tended to be made by non-cyclists and cyclists alike, ie that cyclists acknowledged that this activity was a way in which they differed from ordinary people.

"I think you are considered to be somewhat quirky or eccentric if you to ride your bike."[1]

"I think that's a British thing that, like, 'look at that idiot on a bike', that's the general consensus I think."[2]

3.7   The telephone survey asked people what they thought when they saw cyclists whilst travelling by car. Respondents were most likely (53%) to feel cautious when seeing cyclists on the road. 15% felt indifferent, with 1 in 10 admiring. Whilst the caution may be welcome from the perspective of road safety, this range of answers seems to confirm the sense that cycling is out of the ordinary.

3.8   There are many reasons why this is so, the principal one surely being the current level of cycling which means that Scotland can be divided into cyclists and non-cyclists, in contrast with a place such as Copenhagen, where the overall mode share for cycling of more than a third means that practically everyone is a cyclist to some extent. And there are subtler reasons for the fact that cycling is not normal: discussion at the Cycling Scotland conference dwelt at length on the fact that the urban environment and transport networks are not cycle-friendly. The composition of the Cycling Scotland conference itself is instructive: the vast majority of those present were from the transport sector and most of that group described themselves as working in the sustainable transport/cycling field.

Practicality

3.9   Many remarks were made across the three surveys about the practical barriers to cycling in Scotland, most prominently the weather and the hilliness of much of the terrain. Whilst the stated significance of the weather appears to lessen with the amount of cycling done (people plainly get used to dealing with it), it remains a factor. Hilliness was cited much less and this may be because the gradients in the most populous parts of Scotland are manageable.

3.10   Though it was not one of the most discussed aspects of cycling across the consultation and research, *knowing the route* (and its complement in terms of intervention, the provision of a complete and legible network) arose in focus groups, survey populations and the Cycling Scotland conference as a significant factor for those contemplating cycling. This item could equally well appear under

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[1]   Female participant, Stornoway Focus Group, 27th August 2008.
[2]   Female participant, Stornoway Focus Group, 27th August 2008.

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the heading of culture, given that a prominent and legible cycle network (whether on- or off-road) could act as a clear message that cycling was considered a central part of the transport mix.

3.11   It is interesting that distance did not arise to a great extent. Approximately 10% of phone survey respondents gave the reason "the journey takes too long" as one of the barriers to cycling (much smaller proportions of the web and event survey respondents choosing this answer) and there is evidence that distance was a key factor for rural people interviewed by telephone in deciding how to travel. The Stornoway focus group, meanwhile, produced some comments about the journey to school being prohibitively far for children to be able to go alone.

3.12   For some, lack of access to a roadworthy bicycle is presented as an impediment. There is a chance that this more a symptom of a lack of interest in cycling than a true obstacle to cycling. Nevertheless, the numbers are encouragingly small: only 6% of phone survey respondents cited this as a barrier to cycling. The web and event surveys asked instead whether cost was a barrier and less than 1% of each group chose this option. What this evidence cannot help us to understand is whether what a respondent calls "roadworthy" would actually be enjoyable and efficient to ride. The focus groups produced some interesting comments on the subject of bicycles themselves, with a call for more "ordinary" bicycles (as seen in Holland) to be the norm. This was motivated in part by a belief that such machines would be easier to maintain than bicycles more typically seen on Scotland's roads, and also by a widely expressed feeling that the roadster is a more practical vehicle for cycling in work clothes.

3.13   There is an intriguing discrepancy between the focus groups and other elements of this exercise with respect to bicycle storage. Fear or risk of theft repeatedly arose in focus groups and appeared to be a significant barrier, particularly amongst those living in larger towns and cities. In contrast, none of the surveys produced large responses for the option "insecure parking facilities" as a barrier to cycling, and the Cycling Scotland conference accorded little importance to this as an area for intervention.

Incapacity

3.14   A tenth of phone survey respondents gave "poor health/illness/disability" as a reason for not cycling (more). Rather fewer of the web and event respondents did and this probably reflects the less even age distribution of those samples. In the phone survey, some of the associated remarks give the impression that cycling is something that requires the individual to be already fit and trim. It is a matter of speculation whether some of those who selected this as a barrier could in fact enjoy cycling (and perhaps gain from it in health terms) but it seems likely that the rather marginalised image of cycling does not help people to see it as an everyday activity.

"What would encourage people to cycle (more)?"

Overview

3.15   The principal sources of comparative evidence with which to answer this question are the surveys, and the results of the third workshop session at the Cycling Scotland conference.

3.16   Differences between the three surveys prevent a definitive conclusion being drawn but, in answer to a general question about which changes would lead respondents to cycle (more), options that were selected by large proportions were:

I   Better routes

I   Drivers giving more room

I   Fewer car parking spaces at the destination

I   Traffic-free routes

3.17   At the conference, delegates were asked to allocate weights to a set of intervention categories, reflecting the "value for effort" that these were felt to offer. The four most highly rated options were:

I   On-road infrastructure (gaining, across eight workshop groups, 16.4% of votes allocated)

I   Off-road infrastructure (14.3%)

I   Promotion/marketing (14.1%)

I   Regulation/legislation (13.1%)

3.18   Analysis of variation amongst the workshop groups showed that, in addition to being the top choice, on-road facilities were most uniformly reckoned by workshop groups to be an area of high "value for effort".

Cycle route infrastructure

3.19   The consensus amongst the public at large, those already cycling, and the "cycling community" (those who attended the conference) is clear. There is not absolute agreement about the nature of what is required, but that enhancements to the cycle route network are a necessary measure is a widely held view.

3.20   The frequent references to Holland and Denmark in focus groups, together with the prominence of "traffic-free routes" in the answers given in the surveys, help to show what many stakeholders have in mind, the clear impression being that painted lines will not be considered adequate. This is in contrast with the conclusions of the conference, at which there appeared more appetite for cycle routes which shared space with other traffic (delegates being told that the category *on-road infrastructure* meant cycle lanes, advanced stop lines, contra-flows etc).

3.21   Does the difference of view reflect experience (on-road facilities deliver a good return on investment), pragmatism (they are easier to implement than off-road) or simply a different outlook? It is not possible to say for sure and, of course, the key is the *quality* of what is delivered, be it on- or off-road.

Drivers giving more room

3.22   This subject is discussed in more detail at §4.1 et seq.

Promotion/marketing

3.23   Though understandably not picked out as an obvious target for activity by the surveys, promotion and marketing were seen by various focus group participants as part of the answer. There was discussion of role models as a means of convincing

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the average person to cycle. There was also the recurrent theme of a need for leadership. This would be marketing of a very different form to the classical advertising effort; rather, prominent Scottish politicians would be expected to demonstrate their commitment to cycling in order for the community at large to be persuaded.

3.24   The emphasis accorded to this topic at the conference was more to be expected, given that these less visible aspects of growing cycling are well-established elements of the toolkit. And the background research served to show that most places in which cycling had grown significantly had seen a combination of "hard" and "soft".

3.25   The nature of the promotion and marketing remains a debatable topic, focus group participants frequently criticising the materials they were shown as being patronising or worthy. The clear message is that these efforts must succeed in making cycling something to aspire to and that this may require a move on from marketing that says "cycling is good for you". This is borne out by psychological theory which emphasises the extent to which the decision to cycle is emotional.

Regulation/legislation

3.26   Some argue that this is the crux of the cycling safety issue: leaving aside the quality of the infrastructure and the extent of segregation, if drivers were motivated to take greater care because of the potential costs of colliding with a cyclist, how much might change?

3.27   The idea of altering the balance of responsibility on the roads lay at the centre of discussions at the Cycling Scotland conference but a number of other propositions were also discussed, most notably that of including cycle awareness more explicitly in the driving test. Some went as far as to suggest that the driving test ought to include a module of cycling for those are able to undertake it.

3.28   The fact that these ideas did not arise much in either focus groups or the surveys must not be overlooked, though the mention of slowing traffic down (selected by 24% of the event survey respondents) can be argued to fall into the category of regulation/legislation.

4   Discussion

Responding to the safety worry

4.1   Various aspects of the surveys demonstrate that, the more people cycle, the more confident they become. This is not to say that safety concerns disappear completely but it does show that a part of the safety issue is perceptual. The very frequent references to places such as Holland and Denmark in focus groups help to show that participants are aware of locations where, they feel, it is safe (even pleasant) to cycle. We must ask to what extent this is a result of a) empirical evidence, b) the participants' comparative experience, c) the fact that Holland and Denmark are continually held up as ideal cycling locations and d) the sheer volume of cycling that is witnessed when people visit these places. Few laypeople will be aware, for example, of the relative rates of personal injury accidents for cycling in Scotland and, say, the Netherlands so they are unlikely to know to what extent cycling is *actually* safer in a given place. And few of the focus group participants spoke from knowledge of cycling in Holland or Denmark in comparison with Scotland so, again, they would not be referring to their own experience. This suggests that much of the explanation lies in perception and attitude.

4.2   It is hard to detach the discussion of safety from the philosophical debate concerning segregation. In simplistic terms, some argue that segregation is the wrong policy (because it exacerbates the division between drivers and cyclists, keeps cyclists out of sight, and imposes a huge investment burden, etc), saying that the priority instead should be to make the road network a safe and pleasant environment for cycling. The opposite view is that bicycles and cars do not mix well and that, where possible, steps should be taken to place them on separate networks, because this is what people ask for and, on the evidence of initiatives such as the National Cycle Network, what they actually will use.

4.3   But a more considered analysis of what arose in this consultation and research exercise shows that people want, when cycling, to be more confident that they will not be knocked off. There are various ways of reducing the risk:

l   Segregating bicycles and other traffic

l   Giving bicycles distinct channels on the road (provided there is sufficient space for these channels to be allowed to function properly)

l   Slowing traffic down

l   Giving drivers more reason to take care

l   Making all road users more aware of one another

l   Helping cyclists to maximise their own safety

4.4   Immediately it can be seen that the safety issue cuts across a large number of possible intervention areas, from infrastructure, through legislation, promotion and marketing, to training. Given that all of the above options may have a part to play, all of the intervention areas listed also have their place. Beyond this there is the expectation that a simple growth in the numbers cycling will have its own positive

effect, by habituating other road users to their presence whilst at the same time increasing the probability that a driver will be a regular cyclist her/himself or know someone who is.

How to grow cycling

4.5   The background research carried out is helpful in demonstrating a number of things:

l   That most, if not all, locations in which growth in cycling has been seen have invested in enhancements of cycle route infrastructure of some kind

l   That promotional activity of various kinds has helped to boost significantly the impact of investment in engineering

l   That an incremental approach to investment (spending modestly and seeing good returns as a means to take the next step) can work well in locations where funds are scarce and cycling does not occupy the highest position in policy terms

4.6   These findings are consistent with much of what stakeholders have said within the transport profession and in the community at large. The over-arching theme of commitment deserves mention too: commitment is seen as an essential ingredient so, even if the sums available are not large, it is felt that they would need to be ring-fenced for cycling and guaranteed some way into the future. Another form of commitment is demonstrated by the behaviour of leaders. Both members of the community and transport professionals expressed a desire to see meaningful action on the part of decision-makers. This would suggest not simply the business of appearing at conferences and making appropriate speeches but, rather more significant, being seen in their wider activities to be giving cycling the prominence necessary, as well as supporting connected policy measures which are consistent with a growth in cycling.

Conclusion

4.7   The various consultation and market research exercises carried out may not provide a "road map" as such for achieving the CAPS vision but they do provide some clear routes to follow. In addition, they show that those interested in cycling in Scotland are both passionate and imaginative, leading to the thought that the scope for growth is definitely present (a fact demonstrated with considerable style by the high school students who presented their case at the Cycling Scotland conference). There remains a large proportion of the population who have not yet been won over to cycling and the challenge of CAPS is to spread the enthusiasm of the existing proponents to the wider community. This certainly requires action (in the sense of making visible and sensible changes). It also requires subtlety and a good understanding of the way in which people make their decisions, in order that the right actions are selected and implemented in the most promising manner.

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