

Proposed programme for reviewing and extending Permitted Development Rights (PDR) in Scotland

Cycling Scotland submission
January 2020

Proposed Work Programme

Question 1 – Do you have any comments on the proposed Work Programme, including the proposed phasing and grouping?

We welcome the inclusion of active travel within the proposed Work Programme. We acknowledge the many years of campaigning by Spokes, a member organisation of Cycling Scotland, on this issue. However, despite this, we understand that sheds and storage containers for bike storage, are/continue to be included in the household development grouping (rather than the active travel grouping). We feel it is more appropriate for storage containers and sheds for bikes should be included within the active travel grouping. Storage for bikes is currently insufficiently covered in either grouping. Further, inclusion of such items in the household development grouping means that they are included in phase 3 rather than phase 2 of the proposed Work Programme, and so won't start being considered until autumn of this year (instead of the spring). This is significant as, not only will this mean a delay to the timescale for consideration of such sheds for storage for bikes, but importantly has implications for encouraging modal shift to active travel, especially for short everyday journeys and delivering on the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy. It could also have an (indirect) impact on investment in safe, segregated cycling infrastructure in communities, as fewer people will be likely to own a bike if they are unable to store it securely at their home/property. Bike storage is a significant incentive to encouraging cycling.

We also note that, despite being listed as a priority area for action by the Scottish Government in 2016, there currently appears to be no plans to extend PDRs to allow bike storage sheds/facilities in front gardens or in front of properties. This is disappointing and could discourage behaviour change towards cycling (and active travel). If people have nowhere to store bikes safely, or limited capacity for storage at their property, they are far less likely to cycle. Further, the size of shed/storage facilities required for front gardens/front of properties for bike storage would be much smaller than what regulations currently permit for rear gardens, significantly reducing any suggested negative impacts they would have on the environment and property aesthetics, for example.

We understand from Spokes, who have worked on the garden bike storage issue with City of Edinburgh Council, that since a factsheet on the subject was approved by the Council in 2014, every application for a front garden shed which met the criteria of the factsheet has been successful. The factsheet states that a shed or container with dimensions no greater than 2.5m long x 1.2m deep x 1.5m high is likely to be granted planning permission. These maximum dimensions, therefore, would appear to be a reasonable criterion for the granting of automatic PDR, so that sheds/containers meeting this criterion would not require planning permission and to pay the associated £200 fee.

The Heads of Planning Scotland stated that they have “no strong view on this matter” and recommendation 31 in their 2013 report supports “low carbon living”¹, which would be facilitated by extending PDRs to permit sheds and/or containers for storing bikes in front gardens. Under the current system, the wide range of benefits to the environment, health and society of active travel are not being fully realised. Extending PDRs for bike storage facilities in front gardens, and also for ancillary buildings where such buildings would be used for bike storage, is likely to lead to a range of positive benefits/outcomes.

It is important to ensure that any proposals for regulations for bike storage in front gardens are considered as part of an extension to PDRs, rather than as subject to a planning application, to avoid fees associated with planning applications, typically around £200. If a planning application fee was required to be paid, this would act as a further barrier to modal shift to cycling.

Sustainability Appraisal

Question 5 – Do you have any other comments on the SA report?

Ancillary buildings:

We note in the ancillary buildings section within section 17 of the household development grouping, the proposed update to “Remove restriction to rear curtilage – all areas”. This is welcome and could help to improve facilities and increase bike storage capacity at residential properties.

We believe there should be explicit reference to bike storage, which is not sufficiently covered in either the active travel or household development groupings. As outlined above, we feel it is more appropriate for bike storage shed/containers (etc.) to be included in the active travel section of the proposed review to PDRs.

¹ <https://hopscotland.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/hops-permitted-development-rights-final.pdf>