

#XROUTE

ROUTE

CO-DESIGNING  
ACTIVE TRAVEL



# FOREWORD

BY, COUNCILLOR LESLEY HINDS

**FOR ME, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED WHEN CONSIDERING TRANSPORT ISSUES OF ANY FORM AND THIS NEEDS TO CHANGE.**

Active travel is a term that 75% of those surveyed had never heard of. Therefore, this report is our attempt to give young people a platform and a voice to express the barriers they face when considering active travel.

Active travel plays a vital role in creating a sustainable transport network across the region as well as creating productive, happier and more active citizens in every sense.

We must continue to strive to engage and encourage those who are often underrepresented if we wish to make active travel an easy and natural choice today and tomorrow.

If we are all committed to real, great and lasting change of the transport network in the South East of Scotland, then we need to start with young people.



SEStran is committed and proud to support an ongoing co-design partnership with Young Scot and young people, to continue to engage and empower the future users of our transport network.

**COUNCILLOR LESLEY HINDS,  
SESTRAN CHAIR**



At Young Scot, we recognise that transport is a catalyst to enable young people to make the most of their lives and to connect locally and nationally to opportunities. More importantly, enabling young people to co-design ideas to improve attitudes and infrastructure for active travel builds towards national outcomes around improved citizen engagement, health and the environment. The projects volunteers have demonstrated ambition and commitment to improve the lives of young people and communities across Scotland and we look forward to continuing the collaboration with SEStran to support young people to make their ideas a reality.

**LOUISE MACDONALD @ YOUNG SCOT**





# BACKGROUND

## CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
BACKGROUND	3
SUMMARY	4
PROJECT APPROACH	5
NATIONAL SURVEY	6
MEET THE TEAMS	11
ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS	12
KEY FINDINGS & ACTIONS	18
PARTNERS	20

**THE X-ROUTE PROJECT PUTS YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF COLLABORATIVELY DEVELOPING REGIONAL CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE. COMMISSIONED BY SESTRAN AND DELIVERED THROUGH YOUNG SCOT'S CO-DESIGN SERVICE, THE PROJECT HAS PROVIDED A PLATFORM TO ENABLE YOUNG PEOPLE TO EXPLORE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON ACTIVE TRAVEL.**

Participants have developed a series of ideas and recommendations to improve cross boundary active travel in and around their local area. The intention is for these routes to become a viable option and an integral part of travel for young people and their wider community in the South East of Scotland.

### THE MAIN GOALS FOR BOTH PARTNERS HAVE BEEN TO:

- Support young people to shape and influence sustainable travel services and low carbon activity
- Improve the understanding of young people's cycle network needs
- Raise young people's awareness of active travel options so they will be in a better position to benefit from Scotland's travel options and improve their lives and wellbeing
- Develop young people's knowledge, understanding and confidence working in teams in collaboration with SEStran and key stakeholders
- Celebrate and share the participating young people's achievements to inspire others to use the cross boundary network.



# Summary

X-Route provided a valuable opportunity for young people to share their experiences and ideas to influence SEStran's plans for future improvements to the south east of Scotland's cycle network.



Throughout, it has been clear that the challenges and barriers that would deter a young person from cycling are similar to those of the wider active travel community. A high percentage of the young people had not considered cycling as a means of transport for a variety of reasons

from lack of fitness, confidence or equipment to the perception of distance and fear of safety on the journey. Throughout this report we will share the co-design process deployed on the project, how the young people have shared their views with each other and developed new

Participants were keen that young people, now and in the future, should feel that cycling is an easy and accessible option, with infrastructure in place that enables them to have a safer, quicker and more enjoyable journey.

What did become apparent through X-Route was that active travel as a behaviour needs to be encouraged and facilitated at an early age so people can continue considering it as a reliable mode of transport throughout their life, and reap all the benefits.

ideas, we also include how these findings were presented by the young people themselves and the commitments SEStran have made to continue improving South East

Scotland's active travel network in the future based on X-Route's insights.

# PROJECT APPROACH

Young Scot has extensive experience in engaging with Scotland's young people to seek their views and input in the development of the services they use. Young people have a significant role to play in encouraging organisations and communities to adopt a more collaborative culture, focusing resources to effectively meet the needs of individuals and communities.

Young Scot's co-design service involves young people systematically creating, designing and delivering solutions in collaboration with organisations. Young people are involved much earlier in decision making process through a highly participative approach developing informed insights, ideas, recommendations and solutions for service development, policy and practice. This insight report shares young people's experiences and ideas to improve infrastructure to enable their ideal active travel experience to become a reality.

Using the Co-design process, Young Scot and SEStran:

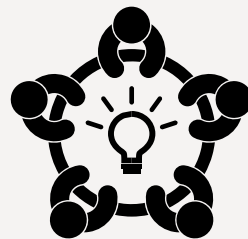
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Devised a youth-friendly National Survey for young people aged 11-25 from across Scotland to gain an understanding of their active travel habits and perceptions. The survey was promoted through Young Scot Rewards (<https://rewards.youngscot.org>), on the partnership's social media channels and networks, and via the Young Scot Digital Platform (<http://young.scot>).

Delivered four Exploration Workshops with up to 12 young people from various socio-economic backgrounds, ages, and local authority areas in South East Scotland. The individuals also had varying degrees of understanding, experience and interest in active travel. These groups were supported to create visualisation of the issues they face with active travel.

Held an Ideas Gathering at the Low Port Centre in Linlithgow, which provided all the project volunteers with a platform to share their issues and co-design solutions with each other and some key stakeholders from the active travel community.

Supported a Stakeholder Workshop to disseminate the young people's insights further and to find out about current and potential improvement projects being delivered around the South East of Scotland. The voice and needs of young people were incorporated.

**57% of respondents join up their active travel journeys with public transport, 61% in the South East.**

**'because it is more active if you cycle everywhere and more efficient'**

# National Survey

The survey received 902 responses from young people aged 11-25 and had responses from all 32 Scottish local authorities. 294 responses came from SEStran's eight authorities in the south east.



## National Picture:

Over 75% had never heard the term active travel before (72% in the South East). Of the 203 who had, the majority had heard of the term through school, university, or a youth engagement settings. 24% did not have access to a bike (23% in the South East).

When asked how physically active the young people were, there was a



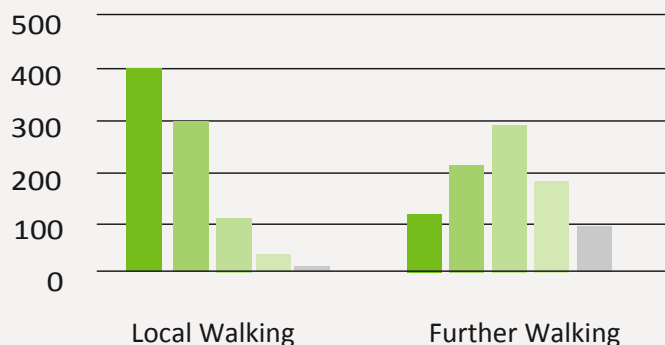
spread of responses. There was a definite correlation between how physically active a young person considered themselves to be and how often they said they walked. This was also comparable to cycling but on a much smaller scale.

The survey asked ‘Approximately how long does/do you think it would take you to make your most common daily journey’, for each of the modes of transport below:

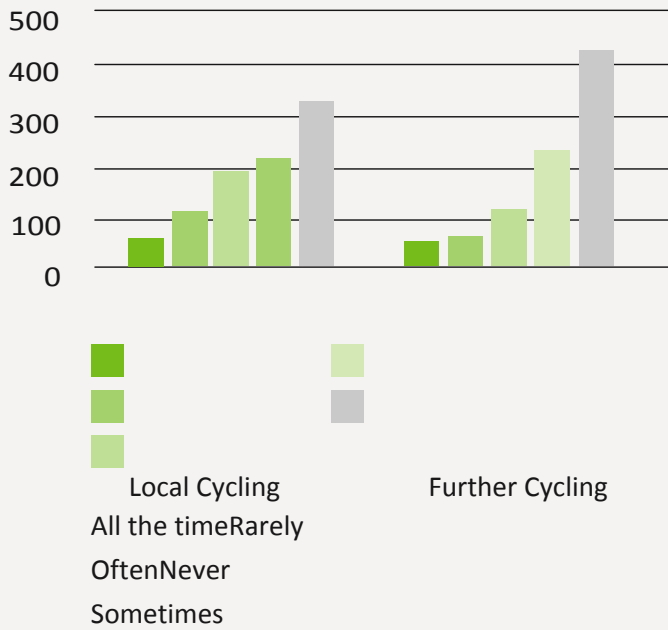
	National	South East
Walk	35mins	32mins
Cycle	24mins	25mins
Public Transport	26mins	22mins
Car	14mins	13min

### National Picture:

The average young person responding to our survey perceived cycling to be around the same speed as public transport. From discussions with active travel experts we know that cycling is on average a faster option which shows there is a misconception here. Many respondents did not know how long their journey would take if they were to walk or cycle, which may mean they have yet to try or even think about traveling in this way.







Nationally, walking is a very common mode of transport for young people when in their local area. Almost 81% (79% SE) walk often in their local area and 37% (41% SE) continue to do so outside of their local area. 18% (19% SE) cycle often in their local area with 12% (14% SE) continuing to do so outside their local area. This demonstrates

that if a young person does active travel regularly they are more likely to use that method to go further afield.

The survey asked what was the furthest the young people had travelled from their home both on a bike and walking. The responses averaged 8miles (6miles SE) for walking and 12miles (8miles SE) for cycling. The majority of their furthest trips were usually for holidays, leisure activities or trips into larger cities, many cited the weather as a factor in why they decided to embark on these trips. Popular destinations were cities, lochs, and parks.



Some of the reasons young people **active travel:** don't active travel:

Some of the reasons young



Because it's easier in a busy village

I don't know the areas surrounding Tranent, if I did and it was safe I would.

At home I live too far for me to walk but it's the perfect distance to cycle

I haven't had any training in terms of cycling on the road and although most of it is common sense I am worried that I could hurt myself or cause an accident.

Not too far to get sweaty doing it and not so far that it takes way longer than driving.

It's embarrassing It's

fun and keeps you in shape.

cycle To reduce our carbon footprint.

I have a physical and learning disability so am unable to

It's not safe to cycle in my area due to busy roads and

It allows you to get a better look at your not safe to walk because of crime surroundings and find new places

It's quicker than the bus

I live at the top of a steep hill so the journey home is tiring

(Green = in south east Scotland, GREY = national)

### Positive themes:

Fun, fitness, cheaper, faster than public transport and sense of enjoyment.

### Negative Themes:

No bike, faster bus, dangerous, weather, hard work/hassle, lack of confidence.

### Open Questions

### Survey Summary

The survey has shown that not only are there young people in Scotland motivated and keen to share their opinion on improving active travel options, they are willing to share their challenges and barriers as well as suggest ideas. These improvements that young people want to see covered the entire experience of getting involved with cycling through to enjoying it more and getting involved with the Active Travel community.

Having to padlock my bike up. I'm scared of someone picking the lock and taking my bike then I'm left stranded.

There are not enough cycle paths and the fact that some drivers are inconsiderate of cyclists.

Busy traffic. Areas with too many trees so people can't see me and I feel less safe where it's quiet.

bike because my parents don't think that it is safe to cycle on the roads. There are no designated cycle paths. My school also doesn't accommodate for bikes and there is a chance that they could be stolen.

I don't have a  
What prevents you from using active travel?  
I've never really thought about it before as my school is only a 10 min journey and most of the time I travel in my dad's car.

**KEY THEMES:**

Not feeling safe on the roads or in their local area, not having a bike, issues with the weather, terrain and effort required, lack of knowledge of local routes and storage facilities.

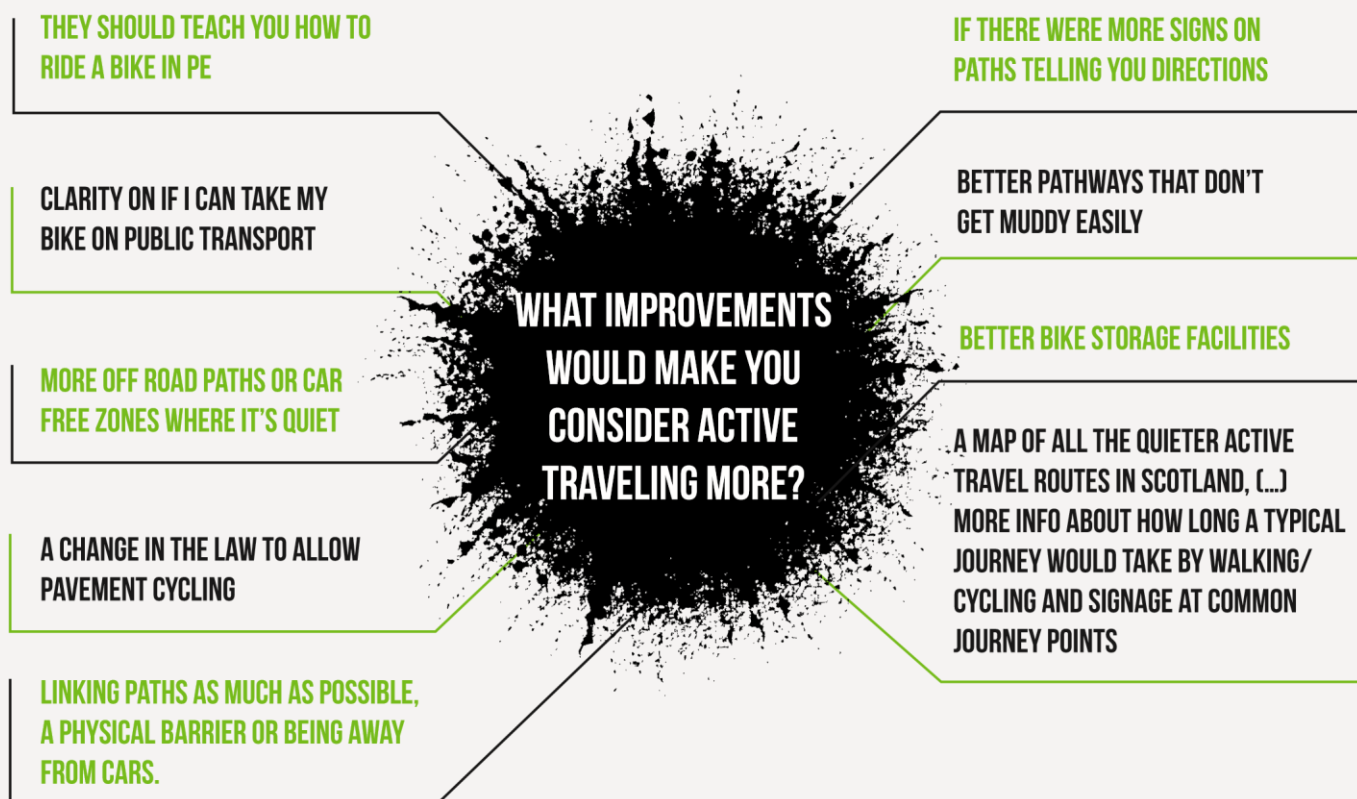


## OPEN QUESTIONS



### KEY THEMES:

More cycle paths, storage and information, looking at new ways to keep cyclists away from traffic as well as incentivising active travel.



### Key themes:

Improved introductory or training opportunities for young cyclists, more cycle routes away from traffic, lack of information and improvements to existing paths, apps and maps to help young people familiarise themselves with their area and established routes.

# MEET THE TEAMS





### TEAM 1

## LARBERT HIGH SCHOOL, BIKE USER GROUP, FALKIRK

The group were made up of six S4-5 pupils aged 16-17, all were keen members of the schools BUG and avid cyclists.

[www.larberthigh.com](http://www.larberthigh.com)

### TEAM 2

## THE VENNIE, MONDAY NIGHT CLUB, WEST LOTHIAN

The group engaged 12 young people through The Vennie's drop in sessions. A core group of six volunteers aged 11-13 took forward the project and further explored the views of their peers.

[www.thevennie.co.uk](http://www.thevennie.co.uk)

### TEAM 3

## TWEEDDALE YOUTH ACTION, BIKE PUNKS, SCOTTISH BORDERS

The group were made up of eight young people aged 14-16 all with an interest in some form of extreme cycling.

[www.tweeddaleyouth.co.uk](http://www.tweeddaleyouth.co.uk)

### TEAM 4

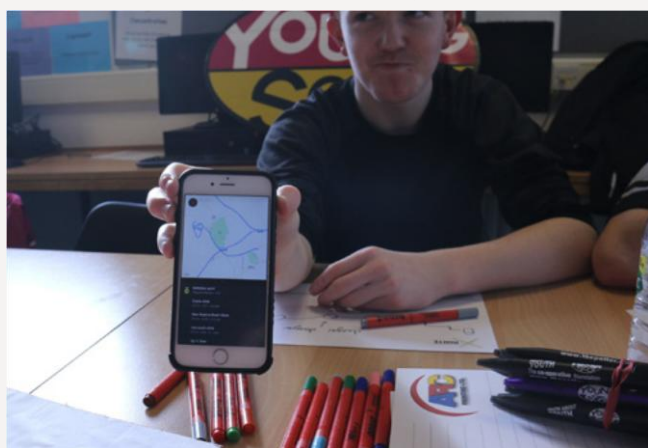
## RECHARGE, TRANENT, EAST LOTHIAN

The group of 12 that took part in the X-Route project were aged 16-22 and had diverse backgrounds including those at school, college, job seeking and in employment.

[www.rechargenow.co.uk](http://www.rechargenow.co.uk)

# Issues & Recommendations

## Promoting information for an understanding of cycling



The groups expressed the barrier of not knowing where to go and getting lost outside of their local area. Where the younger groups could not imagine going further afield due to a lack of signage, the older groups were keen to show off their travel apps which not only provide GPS positioning but also allowed them to compete and race against friends.

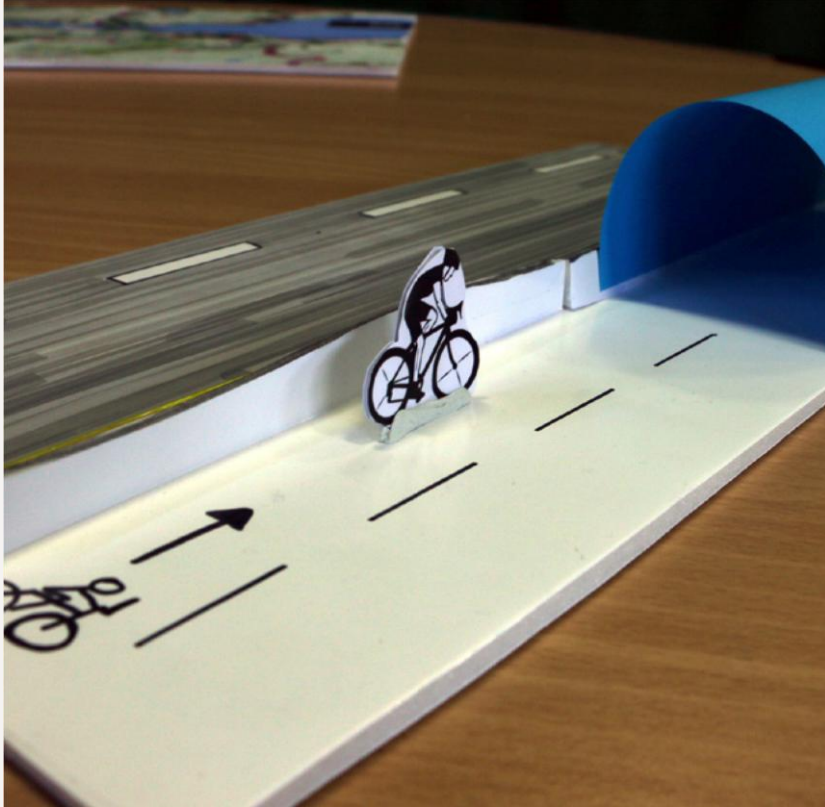
## Cost of kit



Some were worried about the time it takes to travel by bike and being late. Most young people prioritise the speed at which they got to their destination as very important.

The participants explained the initial cost of getting a bike and the safety equipment as barriers to some young people and were considered high end purchases. In two of the workshops areas there were youth focused cycle





projects through which the young people could potentially rent bikes.

*“Showing off how expensive your gear is”* was a common social issue. One of the groups used the expression, “all the gear and no idea” for peers who spend a lot of money on equipment but don’t necessarily have the skill to make the most of it, or even know how to maintain it.

## Safety

Avoiding injury and overcoming the fear of hurting yourself were common barriers.

Participants from the Scottish Borders talked about living in a rural area and shared the experiences of drivers speeding which put cyclists at risk. *“There are a lot of good paths in the area for cycling from town to town off the road but some cyclists still go on the main road – getting in the way and causing accidents.”* The perception is that cycling on roads is problematic which could be addressed by going on supported rides to build confidence/bikeability training.



At the ideas gathering, the groups came together and suggested that the best way to protect cyclists and make them feel safest was by keeping cyclists away from traffic. It was thought that bridges could be used to avoid crossing busy roads and keep the momentum on a journey. Enclosed cycle paths, speed limit of 20mph for cars in cycle areas, free reflective vests, ensuring young people know that by law you should use lights on your bike at night and promoting cycle safety as well as keeping cars out of the city centre would also make a difference. They also wanted to see better signage showing where the more cycle friendly paths were and how they could avoid having to travel in traffic especially

## Attitude

Cycling was seen as an alternative to public transport/walking/traveling in a car but only if they had the equipment, felt safe and developed the interest and commitment to do it regularly.

Participants said that, *“active travel should feel like an achievement and be something that you are proud of doing”*. The main factor that stops them using their bikes

they felt is often laziness, “people could do it but just don’t try”. Being put off by bad weather and hilly areas was common. The Recharge group in East Lothian mentioned that their town was especially hilly and many of their paths were not connected.

They expressed the need for initial commitment to learn and practice how to cycle safely on the roads. It was apparent that most young people still learn to ride a bike at a very young age, but for those who continue riding they chose a specialised area that they enjoy: mountain biking/BMX as an interest/hobby. This showed that most young people see cycling as a recreational activity rather than as a mode of transport.

Getting into road cycling was not something that any of the young people mentioned having started with an interest in. They said that, “*you need to be fit to really enjoy the sport as it’s hard work*”, but admitted that they were fit because they enjoyed the sport and being fit was a byproduct of their activity, not the reason for taking it up.

One group mentioned how schools consider sporting achievements in football, rugby, and hockey highly and will praise students at assemblies for excelling in these areas whereas cycling/active travel achievements weren’t recognised. Groups shared their experiences of the personal sense of achievement when taking a new route, or travelling further than they had before.

## Peer Influence

Young people agreed that although cycling was something that the majority of young people could do, it seemed like a niche group got involved in their areas and it was something that they had or would have had to actively ‘get involved with’. One of the biggest prompts that gets a young person into cycling was if they have a peer group with an active interest.

Peer approval was raised, for example respect for your skill at skating/mountain biking. Negative impacts were also shared such as peer pressure and bullying if you take part in a different discipline or don’t get on with the groups stereotype, “*peer pressure stopped me scootering*”.

The groups felt there can be a lack of respect and even abuse from non-cyclists, such as drivers on the roads and pedestrians with dogs. Speaking about the stereotyped interaction between a cyclist and a driver, it was apparent that cyclists expected the abuse and drivers expected to get a reaction out of the cyclist which they described as not positive.

The Bike Punks youth group spoke about mixing between interest groups, i.e. Mountain Bikers, BMX bikers, skaters, scooters work but each discipline has their own stereotypes. These stereotypes can be a barrier with one group sharing not wanting to hang about with skaters as they were known to ‘smoke weed’.

Participants shared that video role models like Danny MacAskill do a lot to inspire young people to get into cycling.

More accessible role models like Sir Chris Hoy and Sir Bradley Wiggins were mentioned but there was more interest in the more extreme sports personalities than track or road cycling.

Friends and family are seen as motivation for getting into cycling and it helps that in some schools there is a teacher actively promoting/advocating active travel and groups suggested that having cycling as an option for PE would be beneficial. Larbert High already has this with a ‘Pump Track’ on the school grounds.

## QUALITY OF ROUTES

All four groups stated that smooth and clear paths were very important for easy cycling, skating, skateboarding or scootering. The path of choice was 'the black one with the white chips in it' as they were deemed as the best.

Two of the groups went outside to explore their local area and major barriers highlighted from these walkabouts included poor path maintenance with rubbish, broken bottles, potholes visible and a lack of signposting. From here they spoke about how a community can report issues with pot damage, vandalism and any obstructions and suggested making council apps more accessible to young people and the active travel community.

The Vennie participants shared, *"In Livingston you can get around without needing to cross a road"* and expressed how useful the underpasses were. They had an issue with the state of the paths, finding that there was also a lack of lighting and areas of overgrowth which reduced their visibility making the experience nerve-wracking.

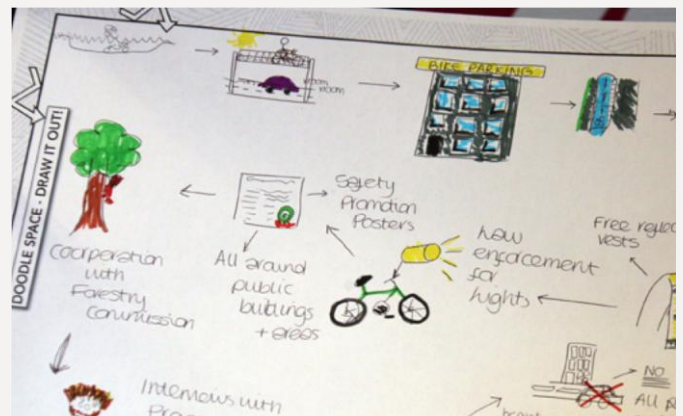
The avid cyclists discussed how different styles of cycle path would encourage different types of cyclists and as young people they would be more interested in a mountain style terrain than a commuter road. They described this as 'the difference between extreme cycling and going for a cycle'. Common issues mentioned were narrow cycle paths, and ones where pedestrians or motorists were likely to use the path as well.

**THIS TOPIC WAS THE MOST POPULAR AT THE IDEAS GATHERING WITH THREE of the six ideas presented in this area:**

1. The young people focused on safety, not only going round corners where they suggested the implementation of mirrors or warning/slow down signs, but also through encouraging cyclists to have lights on at all times and making using a bell when approaching blind corners mandatory.
2. To keep paths clear they wanted to see our behavior change to take better care of the local area, this would make cycling safer and more enjoyable. They highlighted that if the area was clean then people would be less likely to do more damage and were conscious that the local authorities would need to be involved to get an area to an initial high standard.
3. One pitch suggested that lighting was important to make young people feel safe on off road paths, they wanted to see more novel approaches to this by making the lighting blend in with the surroundings either through hanging in natural features or making the path itself glow using either cat's eyes, solar lights or luminous paints.

## Local connections

The groups were asked to think about common places they would go to and to think about the journey there on a bike. The most common places young people wanted to go using active travel routes included: their schools, sports centres,





local hangout spots as well as further afield - generally their closest city.

For cross location travel, the Larbert group shared the value of easy routes to popular destinations like the Kelpies, Falkirk wheel and the canal paths where they can go all the way to Edinburgh or Glasgow.

One of the groups shared that a lack of washing/shower facilities at destinations could be a real deterrent as cycling fast, off road or in the rain would mean spending the day sweaty or wet.

Larbert outlined Stirling as a place they would be keen to see joined to Scotland's cycle network. They printed out a map of the network and were able to show that there was no way for them to get there without cycling on busy narrow roads.

The Bike Punks from Peebles spoke of the big mountain bike track at Glentress which was well outside their local area and which they would love to be able to cycle all the way to, safely.

The Vennie also discussed linking up with the wider cycle network.

## Bike security and storage



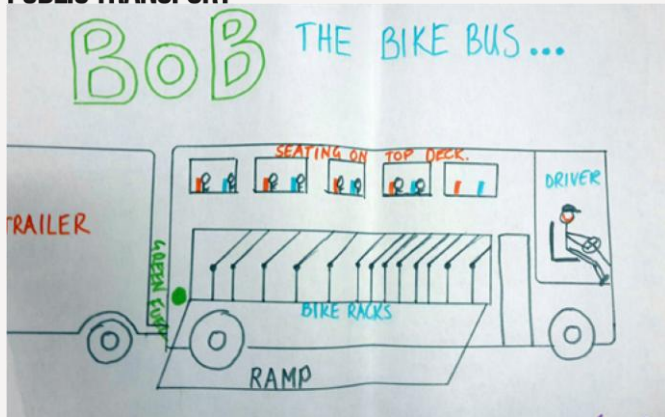
All the groups mentioned the fear of having bikes stolen either from bike sheds, locks outside shops or even while riding along themselves. They admitted that a bike was an expensive item and especially the keen cyclists had usually invested highly in their equipment and do not feel comfortable leaving them in places like the school bike shed. From the ideas gathering there was a range of suggestions about new bike locks that could be linked to a phone app so you knew if someone was trying to steal your bike – or an alarm to at least deter a thief keeping your bike safe. Groups also thought about how there could be more places to lock up when cycling around, they thought about the multistory underground bike parks they have in Asia and discussed bright new designs to attract cyclists to local meet-up points.

All participants agreed that better bike security and storage facilities around popular locations such as schools, public transport links and hang out spots were needed in their local area. They also commented on the lack of CCTV in places

From these initial issues the groups worked on and pitched some big infrastructure ideas that were current in other countries and could be piloted in Scotland. They thought of mechanical underground storage and community hubs that would include showers, storage and security systems to help make people comfortable to park their bikes there.

There was a lot of negative discussion about buses, particularly how there is not always space for taking a bike on the bus, and in some cases you are not allowed on. The group from Peebles mentioned the bus that takes people to the mountain bike trails won't allow bikes on board. They also shared that many bus stops don't link up with active travel paths. There was a range of other problems with public transport that was outside the remit of this project for example: the cost, frequency of service and the attitudes of staff.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**



Thinking about the issues with linking up active travel journeys with public transport the young people thought about making quick loading bike buses with racks on the front and back for bikes or space onboard.



They also suggested rural park and ride for bikes so that bikes had shelter and protection at a local station before the rider for onto public transport into the busy village or city where there is less space.

They also thought about where this bus would stop linking up the smaller towns with cities by picking up at specific active travel network stops.



# KEY FINDINGS & ACTIONS

It is evident that some of the major insights from young people align with wider views and perceptions of other groups in Scotland, demonstrating that there is an active interest within the younger population to improve active travel opportunities.

The national survey data has been identified as a valuable asset by key stakeholders, to be compared to additional data sets including:

- Hands up survey - Sustrans, Local Authorities & Transport Scotland
- Scottish Household Survey – Scottish Government
- Bike Life Survey – Sustrans

Across all the project activity there have been a range of prominent barriers raised through survey comments, live exploration, discussion, and ideas for improvement.

## Information & Knowledge

Young people didn't see cycling as a mode of transport. They were keen to be made aware of active travel routes in their area and support services and schemes to get young people into cycling. They felt that in order to become a commuting cyclist there was a certain level of knowledge and skill that they would need to develop over time.

The young people have stressed the need for more information on active travel – specifically the time, health and the environmental benefits. They want to see

cycling encouraged in schools and as an option in PE. Smart tech and digital services for cycling should be made available to young people.

## SEStran response:

SEStran are looking to explore these options through their active travel officer posts and will seek to lobby local authorities and work in partnership with other active travel organisations to develop and promote the spread of information.

## Social Barriers

For a young person to develop an interest in cycling the biggest factor is having a positive social influence close to them, this could be an advocate in the family, friend, school or in the community. Cycling was described as a niche interest and that there needs to be enjoyment and a social aspect for a young person to develop a sustained interest. Negative social influences were also raised with cycling being seen as 'clique' and bullying based on being part of a group or based on your skill or equipment.

It was apparent that cycling was seen as a physical activity and became something that teenage girls were less likely to do. Young people's social perception of cycling has raised questions around how cycling can be made more accessible and desirable for young people.

## SEStran response:

We need to see stronger support for cycling social clubs or bike schemes in local communities which encourage young people to get involved and push them to experiment with utility cycling as well as the more extreme iterations which younger people tend to be drawn to. We will seek to identify funding opportunities or external support through partners such as Young Scot that will help to educate young people into making cycling more of a natural choice.





## Common Barriers

Across the project it was apparent that young people face many of the same barriers as adults. Ideally young people want there to be safe, available routes away from traffic to encourage regular travel, cycle lanes that are clearly separated from traffic, these routes are well maintained and have decent visibility and there are accessible storage and support facilities for those travelling by bike.

## The Full Journey

It is clear that the overall capacity for active travel cannot be encouraged by simply improving the routes and commuter corridors. Young people need to understand their options, be

encouraged to try cycling, experience the benefits of cycling and be supported to develop their abilities before their decisions to commute would be affected by the quality of our cross regional cycle network.

### SESTRAN RESPONSE:

Having suggested a range of improvements to the infrastructure by the young people both Young Scot and SEStran have been looking at potential funding to continue the development of these ideas. We have made applications to potential funding sources in order to create tangible outcomes from the findings of the report, and we will continue to identify relevant funds to enable issues raised to be addressed.

SEStran's Active Travel Strategic Development Officer will be working with LAs to improve cycling infrastructure throughout the region. Making the roads a safer and more cycle-friendly environment and also looking at cycle locker provision at transport interchanges in the region based on these insights.

### SESTRAN RESPONSE:

SEStran hopes to continue its partnership working with Young Scot to further address and explore the issues raised in the report. It is important that young people are provided with a platform to enable them to provide meaningful input. Furthermore, SEStran aims to involve young people, through co-design, in the future of the regional transport networks and services.



# PARTNERS

Throughout this project over 400 young people have had the chance to share their views and ideas, a smaller cohort of 38 have developed ideas, experienced team working, public speaking (some for the first time) and had the chance to work on a live project. It has empowered them to be proactive and to get involved with a range of initiatives that will help shape the future of active travel in Scotland.

Both Young Scot and SEStran want to thank all those who have been involved.

## SEStran

SEStran is one of seven Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland, covering eight local authorities, within an area of 3,180sq miles and home to 28% of Scotland's population. There is a huge diversity of transportation issues within the SEStran partnership area, from urban congestion to rural public transport and from ferry ports to airports.

For the purpose of this project the focus has been South East Scotland's cycle networks and how these routes can be more

inclusive, accessible and appealing to young people.

## Young Scot

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity. Young Scot provides young people, aged 11-25, with a mixture of information, opportunities and incentives to help them become confident, informed and active citizens. Through the Co-design service, the team have extensive experience in engaging with Scotland's young people at a local and national level to seek their views, input,





collaboration and participation in the development of services they will use.