



## **Moira Nelson Speech to 2017 National Active Travel Conference 14th June 2017**

- What is active travel?
- Why should we let young people co-design our networks
- How will you celebrate active travel and young people in the Year of Young People 2018

For those of us sitting in the room today, we are aware of the benefits of a good transport network and how it enables us to access services, facilities and opportunities we are the experts, right?

So, are children obsolete participants in designing active travel...what do they know, well I am to tell you over the next 10-15 minutes?

Can you remember your first experience of cycling or walking?

As a child, I didn't cycle much, in fact I don't remember cycling at all! I didn't grow up around bikes, my friends didn't cycle and nor did my parents. Even though I was taught to ride a bike as a child, using a bike as a mode of transport is something I've had to learn as an adult.

I grew up in a household that didn't cycle, my parents were fearful of me being on a bike or walking too far:

- There were too many cars on the road
- It's not safe
- We'd have to cycle on the road
- We didn't own bikes

They'd never consider using a bike as a means of transport. Even now my mum winces when I tell her I've cycled to a meeting. "Oh be careful, I don't like you out on those busy roads!" She'll say. Does this ring any bells? Pardon the pun.

So, instead of instilling fears about active travel in young people we should be listening to their worries, putting them at the heart of the design process to make sure they take part and empowering them to make Safe, sustainable choices. As the commuters of the future, should not we not be aiming to create and develop networks that young people will feel safe on and empowered and excited to use?

Well we thought so as well, so in 2016 SEStran with support from Sustrans Scotland and Transport Scotland commissioned Young Scot to deliver a survey of young people nationally, but also focus on groups with the SEStran region- covering 8 local authorities in the south east.

The aim of the study was to look at the barriers young people faced when thinking of using active travel as a means of transport. The first barrier came sooner than we thought...

It turns out that our first barrier came from using the term active travel. From Young Scot's national survey with over 900 responses from all 32 local authorities- 75% of the young people surveyed had never heard the term.



Now if we went to an advertising agency with a mass market product aimed at young people, I don't think 25% recognition of your brand name "active travel" would be deemed a successful campaign. You'd be told in on uncertain (and not necessarily polite) terms to get on your bike or to take a long walk....

Three-quarters of young people don't recognise the Active Travel brand and admittedly that's not an insurmountable problem. However, that headline to me highlights why we need to design walking, cycling etc.... call it what you will with Young People.

We benefited greatly from Young Scot's 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 policy and practice. Supporting people to co-design ideas has been shown to have a radical impact on service innovation and outcomes.

Our co-design process with young people involved explorative workshops with young people from 4 different local authorities in the SEStran region, who were tasked with identifying barriers to active travel and developing solutions.

The workshops challenged young people to think about their local networks and what they thought of them, being careful not to influence their thoughts and decisions, however in fairness the young people needed little prompting to identify issues they had and how they would solve them.

So, what did we need TO SOLVE?

- cost of kit- in the SEStran region 64% of private households don't have access to a bike - Yet it's one of potentially the most sustainable and affordable means of transport.
- Cycling viewed as recreational not transport – so we need to work to change attitudes.
- Peer influence- social barriers young people need positive social influences close to them and encouraging and reaffirming behaviours
- And of course,..... Safety.

As I mentioned safety was a major impediment in my family, we were not unusual as it turns out, less confident cyclists and young people are no exception. Solutions of segregation were common and perception of safety were highlighted often.

\*show path lights video from The Vennie\*



The Vennie is a youth group based in Knightsridge, West Lothian. They work with young people from the age of 5-21 from some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. The young people from The Vennie suggested glow in the dark paths would increase the perception of safety on the path network in West Lothian without creating light pollution to the surrounding environment.

So, I helped them apply to the Scottish Road Research Board (SRRB) for funding to turn their idea into a project. A successful funding bid, and the appointment of Atkins, who are leading on the implementation of the trial in West Lothian, means that a tangible outcome has arisen from engaging with young people.

The sites are in places around Livingston they were identified by the young people during a mapping exercise identifying areas of concern for them and where they felt unsafe.

And, it's not only Livingston that is benefitting from this work. The Star paths work is also influencing work on the dualling of the A9, now that's work co-designed and created by young people, influencing a strategic transport project in Scotland.

So, perhaps I should have looked at my question the other way, why should we let adults design active travel networks?

In the words of Dr Seuss: "Remember adults are just obsolete children and to hell with them!"

A bold statement maybe but to prove the point that wouldn't we all be shocked if this was the attitude towards adults in any planning system?

Young people are the commuters of the future, the networks we are developing and implementing now will be used by them to access education, employment, healthcare and services.

Allowing them to have their say now to develop networks they would feel comfortable and safe to use, create habits to last a lifetime including remembering to include young people in design, are all actions which could help to reduce and keep off the numbers of cars on our roads in the future.

2018 is the Year of Young People. The aim of the year is to give young people a voice for matters that affect their daily lives encouraging participation to influence public services.

So, in terms of celebrating the year of young people, co-designing more active travel networks would seem a great opportunity for people sitting in this room to work with and challenge young people to engage in our active travel networks.

SEStran are committed to working with 4 more groups of young people this year in partnership with Young Scot. We would encourage other to make that commitment across Scotland.

2018 is an opportunity to challenge ourselves and the way we think about active travel:

- who are we designing our networks for?
- Are we including and engaging with the right people at the right stages?



They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, as much as I don't believe that to be true as it's never too late to change our habits, if we instil habits and allow for collaboration from a young age would we be having this discussion now?

Empowering young people to actively engage in their local communities offers a wide range of benefits in the short and long term, as well as fostering a generation of young people who have responsibility and ownership for their environment and future.

Transport and planning policies can be a barrier to many things such as good health and opportunities, so as adults let's actively play our part in breaking down barriers to active travel.

As President Roosevelt once said:

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

I'm greedy and hope we could do both, next year and every year!

Thank you.