

Capital Rail Action Group - Election Transport Manifesto 2011

CRAG was formed 22 years ago to campaign for better public transport in the southeast of Scotland. In particular, we have been campaigning for the development of an integrated and sustainable transport strategy for the Edinburgh travel to work area.

Many UK cities are badly congested with cars and heavy goods vehicles, an unfortunate legacy from the ideas of the 1960s that made car access the priority with the result that we have inherited far too many noisy and unsafe city centres. However, throughout Europe during the past three decades a new thinking has emerged in an effort to reverse the appalling congestion that resulted from the car-oriented culture.

This new view of how cities should function has been summarised by Danish town planner Jan Gehl as follows "100 years ago city centres were about work; 50 years ago for shopping; in our time they should be devoted to leisure and prioritised for walkers, shoppers and cyclists"

CRAG supports this view of how modern cities should be developed, which essentially leads to the following manifesto calls:

- *To develop our cities in such a way that car use for commuting is considerably reduced because people will choose to use public transport and for shorter distances healthy travel options such as walking and cycling.*
- *To prioritise national and local transport expenditure on the development of good quality public transport such as tram systems and safe cycle networks, both of which have been shown to lead to a significant reduction in car use.*
- *To enhance the public realm by creating traffic free areas with open spaces and avenues that are attractive places to work, shop and visit. Leading in turn to investment by new businesses to cater for the audience.*

Public Realm Enhancements

CRAG has always supported rail developments as a way of enhancing the public realm by providing better travel to work options. The development of a tram network along with the introduction of safe, segregated cycle lanes to the city centre could additionally lead to a huge reduction in car commuting.

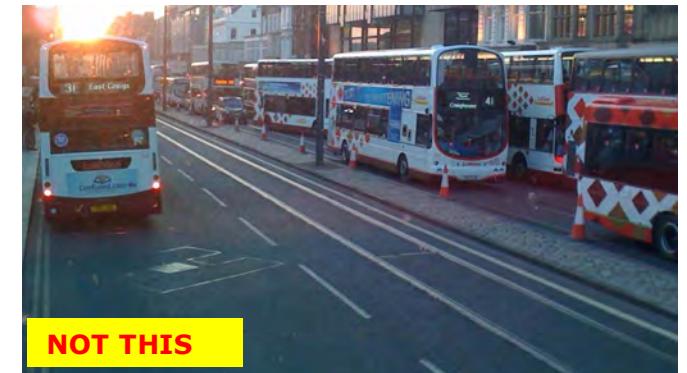
The development of safe cycling networks in Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany typically leads to a 30-40% share of commuter journeys by cyclists and to substantial numbers of children using the networks to travel to school. Sceptics often claim that this is due to the fact that this is due to the flat terrain but this is demonstrably incorrect. Cycling declined in these countries after the Second World War as it became unsafe due to traffic congestion. These countries countered this trend in the 1960s and 70s by introducing cycling master plans and the increase in cycling goes hand in hand with the development of safe networks.

We support the recent proposals by the City of Edinburgh Council and Jan Gehl Consultants for the 'greening' of Edinburgh city centre. The consultants recommended that a clear vision be adopted for the most important city centre spaces, based on 'a city of the senses, a place for people'. Key recommendations, which CRAG supports, include two in particular:

- *Addressing the challenges of traffic dominated streets, especially buses on Princes Street.*
- *Improving the quality of the pedestrian experience.*



Some of the ways this can be achieved are outlined below and overleaf, based on tried and tested ideas from other cities at home and abroad.



Re-regulation of Public Transport and Integrated Ticketing

The UK still suffers from the ill effects of the 1980s deregulation of public transport (excluding London) that has made the development of an integrated public transport system so difficult. The results are clear with heavily congested cities, in part due to bus companies competing along the same routes, which lead to increased congestion, increased air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions, and dispersal of revenue.

CRAG supports the re-regulation of public transport so that local authorities can organise services to meet public needs in an integrated fashion. London is an example of how it can work with companies bidding for routes, which they then operate to timetables developed by the local authority.

We also call for the introduction of a public transport smart card system that allows seamless movement between bus, tram and rail. A good example can be seen with the Transport for London Oyster card, which can be used on the underground, trams and buses and easily topped up at stations or by mobile phone.

Edinburgh Tram

CRAG supports the development of the Edinburgh Tram network and looks forward to the completion of the first phase running from Edinburgh Airport to Newhaven. This route encompasses several major business and residential areas, as well as three new rail/tram interchanges at Edinburgh Gateway (Gogar), Edinburgh Park and Haymarket. The eventual aim should be to create a comprehensive tram network serving the city centre and other important hubs within the city.

CRAG supports new tram routes serving the South of Edinburgh, including the Royal Infirmary and the Edinburgh Bioquarter at Little France and beyond. Consideration should be given to running tram trains from Haymarket on to the South Suburban line to open a new direct transport link to Little France via Gorgie and Morningside, an option that could be achieved at relatively little cost.

It will be important to also complete the Roseburn loop as further funding becomes available. This will provide a good quality transport service to Telford College, a campus with some 20,000 students, many of who would use the tram, and will serve the Waterfront.

CRAG is appalled at the negative image that has been created of Scotland and Edinburgh from the politicisation of the tram project. The Scottish Parliament voted through this project and every effort should be taken to see it through to completion, as was the will of Parliament. We also cannot see why any cost overrun, much of which was unforeseeable by the nature of the project, should be made a political football when road schemes run two or three times over budget with little comment. The M74 extension in Glasgow is a case in point, being initially approved at £245m and we now know the final cost will be almost £700m.

Borders Rail

CRAG supports the reopening of Borders Rail to Tweedbank and think it makes sense to extend this to Melrose in the near future. The potential of Borders Rail is, in our view, underestimated because the opening of the route will surely encourage more people to move to the area and commute to Edinburgh.

In addition, the tourism element could play a significant role if well managed and marketed by offering themed journeys to visit Melrose, Abbotsford and other historic sites. The capability to take cycles on the train for a day's touring in the area could also have a big market with Edinburgh residents.

The opportunity to transfer freight from road to rail should also be looked at as one way of promoting business development in the Borders area and bring jobs back to the local economy.

Abbeyhill Rail Link

An opportunity exists to reopen Abbeyhill Station, making use of the redundant trackbed to be seen immediately upon exiting the Calton tunnels when travelling south from Waverley Station.

Much of the relaying of rails, etc. required for this will be delivered by the current Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme whilst trains currently sitting idle at Waverley could easily be extended the few hundred yards to Abbeyhill – making reopening possible at low cost.

The station site is well placed to serve the Scottish Parliament, allowing rapid access also to/from the heart of the dense tenements of the Calton, Easter Road, London Road and Abbeyhill areas.

It is also an ideal location for those travelling from/to points west and north by rail to interchange with the many passing buses.



Modern trams allow a city to enhance its streets and recapture space for people (Montpellier, France)



Safe cycle lanes encourage commuters, children and shoppers to travel by bike (Copenhagen, Denmark)



Worldwide, the trend is to create people-friendly city centres that are proven to be good for shops and tourism (Munster, Germany)

For more information about CRAG, its activities and contact details, please refer to our web site at www.capitalrail.org.uk