

Conversation 4 - Clean Transport, Less Pollution

Wednesday 25 January, 2017

Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI), High School Yards, 12 Infirmary St EH1 1LT.

Aim

The aim of this event was to “*discuss; What are the City's plans to curb air pollution from vehicles? How are the Clean Air Zones progressing? What role do Electric Vehicles play in cutting carbon emissions? What are "particulates" and how do they affect our health? What is the potential for much cleaner vehicles?*”

Speakers

Councillor Lesley Hinds, Convener of Transport for Edinburgh (TfE)

Keith Stark, Enterprise Car Club

Emilia Hanna, Local Air Pollution Campaigner, Friends of the Earth

Nigel Holmes, Scottish Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Association.

Summary of the outcomes of the discussions

Low emission vehicles

- What's working well
 - There was acknowledgement of improvements that have taken place in recent years. City Car clubs which include electric and hybrid vehicles are available, whilst Lothian buses have been purchasing environmentally friendly vehicles. Battery technology is developing and manufacturers have been persuaded to produce electric cars which are becoming cheaper. Electric bicycles are also available.
- Gaps/problems needing Improvement
 - To encourage the use of electric vehicles more charging points are required and the grid infrastructure has to be able to cope with the demand.
 - There was concern that lack of EV infrastructure is putting manufacturers off. Changing vans and lorries to electric, hydrogen and alternative fuels has begun and should continue. Legislation is required to kick-start and maintain initiatives. One of the problems is that pollution moves from cars to generators. There needs to be the infrastructure in place to help and support people to make environmentally friendly behavioural choices.
- Long Term Vision
 - In the long term there would be fewer vehicles and these would either be electric or hydrogen. Car clubs and car sharing are the future! An electric/hydrogen public transport network will have been further developed. There would be no diesel vehicles –a diesel scrappage scheme would have been introduced. There would be more car clubs. Electric vehicles could be used as power storage units for intermittent renewable energy (which has real value estimated in the USA at \$4000 per vehicle per annum). Further development of the use of solar energy to power car batteries would be a valuable option.

Air Quality

- What's working well
 - As far as air quality is concerned it is good that monitoring stations have been introduced and as a result of campaigns, media attention has been highlighting the problems including those for health. Park & Ride has

resulted in greater use of public transport. Increase in parking charges may also have deterred some car users from entering the city centre.

- Gaps/improvements required
 - Legislation has worked well in the past (Clean Air Act) and could be utilised in future.
 - There needs to be more public awareness of air pollution and its consequences.
 - There is a lack of funding for active travel which needs to be encouraged.
 - Roads must become safer to encourage greater use by cyclists.
 - It would be useful if people could have access (on website) to widespread air quality collection devices to build a real time picture of air quality in the city enabling people to avoid roads with poor air quality. There was concern that planners fail to consider or understand air quality problems during strategic planning. In addition, no one is being held to account over air quality breaches. There is a problem of diesel generation on construction sites.
 - In Edinburgh the Sheriffhall roundabout must be improved: congestion is causing air pollution and costs travellers money in brakes, tyres, clutch fuel and time.
 - There should be an increased use of car sharing especially at peak times. There needs to be a disincentive to car use, with cars only being used when necessary. Implementation of low emission zones and congestion charging should take place.
- Longer term vision
 - There would be reduced air pollution. In the city centre there would be a massive reduction in vehicles. There would be more pedestrian areas and with the majority of vehicles removed from the city centre there would be a healthy attractive environment.
 - There should be more dedicated cycling routes. With increased use of bicycles and walking and a reduction in air pollution people would be healthier with concomitant reduction in strain on the NHS.
 - Congestion charging could provide funds for free buses/trams. Pollution emissions from cars (per litre?) would be available on car advertisements.
 - As far as carbon dioxide is concerned, development of a feasible method of transforming it into carbon and oxygen might be useful.
 - More tree planting to remove carbon dioxide was suggested.
- Integrated approach/Policy
 - It was felt that there was increasing public impatience to do something about the transport situation. There needs to be a change of attitude ie cars should not take priority.
 - It was felt that it was important for buses to be in public ownership. Subsidising them should take place (perhaps from sources such as congestion charging).
 - Use of the Traffic Commissioner's powers could be utilised to help guide policy.
 - Planning, transport, air quality and climate change policies need to be joined up. Transport is only part of the picture. Tackling the problem also addresses the sustainability issues of fossil fuel use.
 - It was pointed out that construction of 'out of town' development leads to an increase in commuters.

- As well as pollution caused by transport we need also to consider domestic pollution.
- Environmental legislation should be implemented.
- Improvements should be done quickly with 2030 perhaps being a preferable target than 2050.