

The Active Travel Debate:

 Scotland's views

A NEW
WINTER
APPROACH



The Scottish Government has made a commitment to direct at least 10% of the transport budget towards active travel by 2024/25.

This investment is for creating networks of safe, segregated routes for cyclists and pedestrians (and a growing range of other active travel) which are projected to account for half of all urban journeys by 2030.

The active travel workshop during A New Winter Approach Scotland (September 2023) brought together winter maintenance practitioners from Scotland's local authorities to explore various aspects of active travel schemes in Scotland, delving into engagement levels, the ideal scheme characteristics, effective winter treatment, and the barriers to implementation.

Engagement with active travel schemes

Participants shared their experiences and concerns regarding engagement with new active travel schemes. It became evident that many feel left out of the planning process, as these schemes often seem

like a "done deal" before winter service delivery teams even have a chance to provide input. This lack of input from the right stakeholders can lead to a lack of ownership and potential issues with winter treatment and maintenance, particularly as these schemes expand rapidly.

We also discovered that communication gaps between departments can hinder the effectiveness of winter maintenance efforts. It was clear that engaging road teams during the planning stage and considering treatment logistics in advance is crucial to ensuring successful active travel schemes.





The ideal active travel scheme

During our discussions, the participants let their imaginations roam and envisioned the perfect active travel scheme. Participants dreamed of wide roads with plenty of space for everyone, eliminating the need for compromises between pedestrians, cyclists and road users.

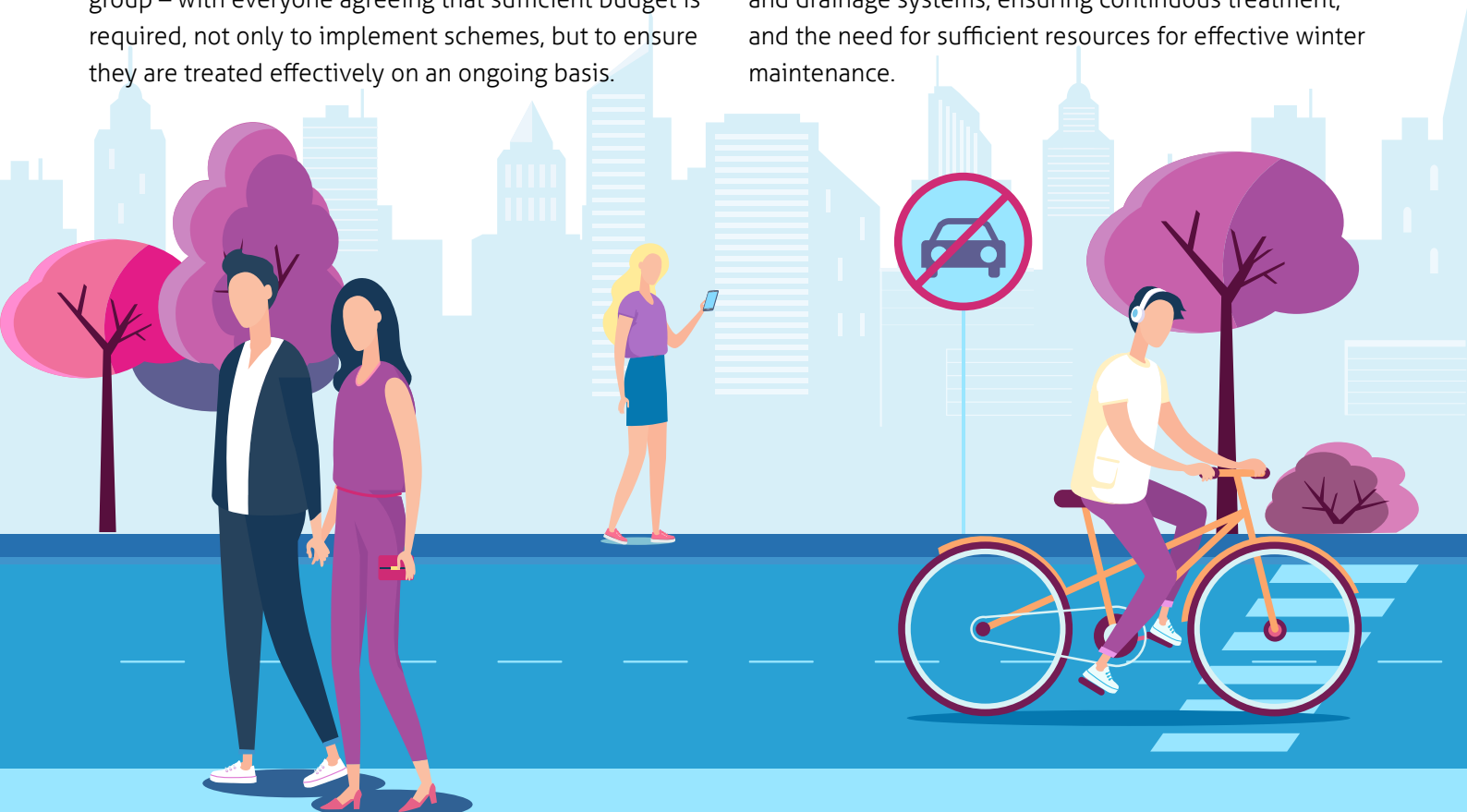
While acknowledging the challenging Scottish weather, participants suggested underfloor heating schemes which would eliminate the need for winter treatments altogether!

Budgets were also a factor unanimously agreed on by the group – with everyone agreeing that sufficient budget is required, not only to implement schemes, but to ensure they are treated effectively on an ongoing basis.

The group emphasised the importance of applying best practice to any future active travel schemes by understanding user needs through discussions and data-driven insights before any scheme is implemented. We also recognised the need to tailor schemes to suit different communities as each authority has its own unique set of characteristics which impact how a scheme would be designed and implemented.

Ensuring effective winter treatment

When it comes to designing active travel schemes, participants agreed it was essential to consider their resilience during winter months. The group stressed the importance of maintaining the schemes' accessibility and drainage systems, ensuring continuous treatment, and the need for sufficient resources for effective winter maintenance.



Finally, the group recognised the need for national guidance on winter treatment expectations to ensure consistency across different schemes.

Barriers to implementation

As with any grand vision, there are obstacles to overcome. We explored the challenges of cost and resource limitations – something that was felt by all participants - as well as the availability of suitable land for active travel schemes.

We recognised the need for dedicated human resources and political will to bring these schemes to life, as well as the role of the personal responsibility of the users of active travel schemes.

A common issue faced by the group were the physical barriers which prevented the treatment of schemes. It was suggested that the construction phase should aim to minimise obstructions to treatment vehicles, such as kissing gates and bollards, to enable smooth access for treatment.

The group also agreed that the best schemes they had seen included segregated cycleways, which help to prevent interaction with vehicles.

Conclusion

Our active travel workshop unveiled the intricacies surrounding the engagement, design, and implementation of active travel schemes in Scotland. Compromise is key to achieving safe passage for active travel users throughout the winter period.

By addressing the challenges we identified and considering the ideal characteristics and effective winter treatment, participants were given food for thought to create a healthier, more connected Scotland - one step, pedal, and stride at a time.



Join the debate

If you would like to join the active travel debate at one of our upcoming events, [click here](#) to find out where ANWA is heading next.

