Independent Policy Observation Report

Active Travel Legibility and Cycling Infrastructure in Central Dundee

Independent field observation aligned with Scottish and EU transport decarbonisation frameworks

By Jack Jardine


DUNDEE CYCLE HUB
ORKSHOP
Bike Hire
Coffee & Food
ORMATION
REAL DAIRY ICE CREAM
Cafe

Disclaimer

This document is an independent observational note based on a short field visit in central Dundee. It has not been commissioned by any public authority and does not represent an advocacy position.

The purpose of this report is to document street-level observations and consider them in relation to existing policy frameworks including Scotland's National Transport Strategy, Scotland's Active Travel Framework, and EU transport decarbonisation targets.

Observations are qualitative and indicative rather than comprehensive.

Policy Context

Scotland

The National Transport Strategy (NTS2), published in 2020, sets the long-term vision for Scotland's transport system. The strategy identifies four priorities:

• reducing inequalities

• taking climate action

• delivering inclusive economic growth

• improving health and wellbeing

Within this framework, walking and cycling are identified as central to achieving climate and health outcomes.

The Active Travel Framework (2020) further states an ambition that by 2030 Scotland's communities should be designed around people and place, enabling walking and cycling to become the preferred mode for short everyday journeys.

Local context: Dundee

Dundee City Council's Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan 2024–2034 identifies the development of an integrated network of active travel routes as a key objective. The strategy includes proposals for "Active Freeways" designed to create coherent cycling corridors across the city.

The waterfront redevelopment has also included infrastructure intended to support cycling, including the Dundee Cycle Hub, providing bike hire, maintenance and storage facilities.


THE COUNTING HOUSE
MEADOWSIDE
UNIFORMS
CSS
BE

European policy context

Although the United Kingdom is no longer an EU member state, many transport decarbonisation objectives remain aligned with European frameworks.

The EU Fit for 55 legislative package, introduced in July 2021, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the EU by at least 55% by 2030 relative to 1990 levels.

Transport plays a central role within this framework, with decarbonisation requiring both technological transition and modal shift toward public transport, walking and cycling.

Swedish comparison

Sweden’s Climate Policy Framework, adopted in 2017, sets a legally binding target of net-zero emissions by 2045 and includes a specific objective to reduce domestic transport emissions by 70% by 2030 compared with 2010 levels.

Cities such as Malmö have integrated cycling infrastructure deeply into urban design, including clearly marked cycling corridors, bicycle priority signals and extensive cycle parking.

Observation Method

The observations in this report were made during a short walk across central Dundee and the waterfront area on a clear Saturday afternoon.

Locations included:

• waterfront promenade

• Dundee Cycle Hub area

• central streets and intersections

• routes between the railway station and city centre

Photographs were taken of several locations to document road design, public realm conditions and cyclist presence.

The purpose was to observe whether cycling infrastructure and active travel priorities were clearly legible within the urban environment.

Key Observations

Low visibility of cycling infrastructure

Across the areas observed, cycling infrastructure appeared limited or difficult to identify.

No clearly marked cycle lanes were visible on several central streets documented during the walk.

The road environment remained strongly oriented toward motor vehicles, with wide carriageways and significant space allocated to cars.

Low cyclist presence

Cyclists were observed only occasionally.

The low visible uptake of cycling may reflect broader conditions, including infrastructure legibility and perceived safety.

Limited cycle parking

Convenient and visible bicycle parking infrastructure appeared limited in the areas observed.

Even in locations near the waterfront and city centre amenities, bicycle parking facilities were not prominent.


FOUR POINTS
FLEX

Disconnection between facilities and network

The Dundee Cycle Hub represents a clear investment in cycling infrastructure. However, its presence did not appear to correspond to an immediately visible wider cycling network in surrounding streets.

A single facility cannot substitute for a clearly legible network of routes connecting everyday destinations.


COSTA
Bauer Media
GREGGS
SPOILT FOR CHOICE
LITTER

Motor traffic dominance

Road environments near the railway station and surrounding streets remained strongly dominated by motor vehicles.

Pedestrian crossings and junction layouts appeared designed primarily around vehicle flow rather than pedestrian or cycling comfort.


rity Scotland
FOUR POINTS
FLEX

Under-utilisation of public space

Some waterfront public spaces appeared relatively quiet despite favourable weather conditions.

While this observation cannot determine causation, it raises questions about whether connectivity, accessibility or visibility influence how these spaces are used.

Limited wayfinding

Clear signage or wayfinding for cycling routes was not immediately visible during the observation period.

For new or occasional users, the absence of clear route communication may reduce the likelihood of choosing cycling as a mode of transport.

Policy Implementation Gap

The observations suggest a potential gap between policy ambition and street-level experience.

National and local policy documents strongly support active travel and cycling infrastructure. However, the urban environment observed did not consistently communicate cycling as a normal or prioritised transport mode.

This gap may arise from several factors:

• incomplete cycling networks

• insufficient route legibility

• safety perceptions in mixed-traffic environments

• limited visible supporting infrastructure

Opportunities for Further Investigation

The observations in this report indicate several areas where further analysis may be useful:

• mapping continuity of cycling routes across the city

• evaluating pedestrian and cyclist safety at major junctions

• assessing distribution of cycle parking infrastructure

• examining wayfinding and route signage for cyclists

• studying patterns of public space use along the waterfront

A broader observational study or user survey could help identify barriers to active travel uptake in greater detail.

Conclusion

Dundee has demonstrated policy commitment to active travel through national alignment, local transport planning and investments such as the Dundee Cycle Hub.

However, within the limited area observed, cycling infrastructure and route legibility appeared relatively weak.

Motor vehicle dominance remained visually strong, and cycling did not appear to function as a highly visible or widely adopted transport mode.

This suggests that the next stage of policy implementation may require greater emphasis on network continuity, route visibility and user confidence in order to translate policy ambition into everyday behaviour.