Press Invite 31st March: MSPs Get on Electric Bikes to Launch eCycle - Green Transport Initiative by Edinburgh’s Colleges and Universities

26th March, 2015

**Event: MSPs Launch eCycle – Universities & Colleges in Edinburgh Initiative**
**Date: 10.00 am Tuesday 31st March.**
**Location: Roundabout at Top of Calton Hill, Edinburgh**

**Press Invitation; Embargoed 10.00 am Tuesday 31st March**

You are invited to the roundabout at the top of Calton Hill to join Alison Johnstone MSP (Scottish Green Party), Sarah Boyack MSP (Scottish Labour Party), Jim Eadie (SNP) with Cllr Russell Imrie (Chair of SEStran) on their electric bikes as they officially launch an eco-friendly cycle sharing scheme for Edinburgh’s Colleges and Universities.

The eCycle initiative involves six of the City’s leading Colleges and Universities, together with key partners. The bike sharing scheme, with added battery power, is one of a number of projects the group is investigating as it seeks to lessen the environmental impact of travel around their various campuses and offices across Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh Further and Higher Education Transport Group (EFHETG) is focussed on all aspects and modes of travel linked to their sector. Edinburgh College, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University, Scotland’s Rural College, Transition Heriot-Watt and The University of Edinburgh are institutional members, representing a community of over 130,000 people. SEStran and Sustrans provide strategic support to the Group.

EFHETG has bought 28 electrically assisted bicycles (plus an electric cargo bike) to form the innovative eCycle Scheme. Utilising the eCycles, the group will encourage members of the further and higher education community to consider cycling as an alternative to single car occupancy or public transport for personal and business journeys. The eCycles will be managed locally at each institution and will be available on a shared basis with training provided if required. Users will be provided with locks, panniers, a high visibility vest and a helmet.

The project is supported by a generous grant of £25,000 from SEStran with match funding by the Group. Chair of SEStran, Cllr Russell Imrie noted

“SEStran is proud to support the Edinburgh Further and Higher Education Transport Group’s eCycle scheme. The Scheme is a great example of what working in partnership can achieve. Cycling for shorter journeys is great exercise, and helps tackle traffic congestion on the region’s roads and to reduce our carbon footprint. Electrically assisted cycles are also a great way for those who are new, or those returning to cycling, to give it a go”.

Alison Johnstone, Co-Convenor of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Cycling says:

“Cycling should be an easy and attractive option for a wide range of people, and I’m convinced that electric bikes are going to have a much bigger role in the coming years. I’m delighted that our universities and colleges are leading the way again and this project will see many benefits for individuals and the city.”

Jamie Pearson, Environmental Sustainability Manager at Edinburgh Napier University, noted:

“I’m delighted with the financial support SEStran and our own institutions have provided towards the eCycle Scheme. Through travel surveys and discussions within our sector we’re very aware that many members of our community would be willing to try cycling, or cycle more, with a bit of additional resource and support. Users will still have to physically pedal the eCycles but the motor and battery attached will boost confidence, add support to increased mobility and, from personal experience, make going up hills an absolute breeze!”.

The Scheme will act as a test-bed to provide more information on cycling within the further and higher education sector. It will aid local and national strategies to increase cycling and, as part of institutional travel plans, support the reduction of carbon emissions associated with personal and business travel in and around Edinburgh.

**Notes for Editors**:
SEStran is the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership.

* For more information on the Scheme, visit each institutional website.
* All users of the eCycles must register at their home institution.
* Membership varies at each institution but members must commonly be a staff member or student.
* The Scheme is not open to members of the public.
* The eCycles were procured through a formal ‘Invitation to Quote’ process.
* The Scheme gained support and knowledge exchange from the team at Sustrans, specifically through the e-bike project within the Cairngorms National Park.

**ENDS**

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