

HomeZones

for **S C O T L A N D**

Reclaiming Residential Streets for People

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editorial

The Scottish Home Zone pilot projects have a lot to learn from experiences south of the border - where projects are more advanced - and, crucially, from the continent. Decades of experience there demonstrate the societal benefits Scotland will enjoy by making Home Zones the norm for our residential streets.

To this end, the campaign for Home Zones in Scotland has recently taken a number of very welcome steps forward. We have progress on the ground with four pilot Home Zones under preparation in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Thurso. The Home Zones for Scotland Network has been invited on to the Scottish Executive-led panel set up to monitor these areas.

Rather more unexpectedly, provisions added to the Scottish Transport Bill in the final stage of the legislative process in the Scottish Parliament have put Home Zones on a legal footing. We are very glad to see this as the Network has taken the lead in advocating the need for legislation. (You can read more about this and the Home Zone pilots inside.)

We are also happy to note a growing awareness in the media that residential streets don't have to be abandoned to speeding motorists: there are broader community benefits to be gained from a more balanced use of streetspace.

Colin Howden

Welcome to the first Home Zones for Scotland newsletter

The Home Zones for Scotland Network has been meeting for just 18 months yet in that time we have significantly advanced the case for Home Zones. We have:

- organised a major conference resulting in a Ministerial commitment to Home Zones;
- published a well-received report;
- been involved in monitoring the Home Zones pilot projects;
- taken the lead in securing an amendment on Home Zones in the Transport Act recently passed by the Scottish Parliament.

Scottish pilot projects

Terry Harding of Play Scotland reports on the Scottish pilot projects

Whilst the pilot projects (see box on right) are endorsed by the Scottish Executive, no additional funds have been made available to the authorities concerned. Now for the good news: the Executive *has* funded a three year research project which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the four Home Zones.

Land Use Consultants have been appointed to carry out the research. Their objectives are to compare the "before" and "after" situation in each scheme; monitor the development of the scheme; assess what measures can be used in other schemes; and to assess whether the aims and benefits of Home Zones can be achieved within existing legislation.

The Home Zones Network will be involved in the monitoring process and is particularly interested in community involvement and the wider social and health benefits of Home Zones. We want to emphasise children and young peoples' issues rather than purely transportation issues. Updates will be provided in future issues of the Newsletter.

Local action on Home Zones:

Aberdeen - Alexander Terrace in the Tillydrone area of the city. This will complement other regeneration projects: traffic calming, football and basketball pitches, communal wheelie-bins, and a fenced-off play area.

Dundee - a new housing development on the old Royal Infirmary site will become a pilot Home Zone. The project will incorporate specially designed roads and a large play area linked to adjoining housing estates.

Edinburgh - west of the City Centre in the Caledonian Crescent area (off Dalry Road), the aim is to create a higher quality of life for local people by reclaiming the streets for community use: more pleasing streetscapes, green areas, seating and play equipment will all feature.

Highland - the Ormlie area on the edge of Thurso. This will be in partnership with Ormlie Regeneration and the Social Inclusion Partnership and will be developed in three phases. Traffic calming and a play area have already been introduced. Future plans include carriageway works, planting and opening up greenspace. Phase three is in development.

Home zones and well-being

The health and well-being benefits of Home Zones are indisputable. Not only do they contribute directly to government targets for road accident reductions, but they provide a nurturing environment for the development of communities.

Groups which often feel excluded from public space – young children, older people, women in minority ethnic communities – can now play outdoors, stroll around safely or stop to chat. These benefits have potential for reducing health inequalities and for promoting social inclusion.

Surprisingly, a recent examination of Health Improvement Plans for all 15 Health Boards in Scotland revealed almost no commitment to Home Zones as a way of enhancing physical



and mental health. The Network will continue to encourage both Health Boards and local transport departments to acknowledge and promote the health benefits of Home Zones.

Helen Tyrrell,
Voluntary Health Scotland

Learning continental lessons

Sue Gutteridge of Stirling Council reports on the Home Zones Study Tour to the Netherlands, July 2000

Planners, road engineers, housing officers, community activists, local politicians, environmentalists and play people, amongst others, were on the Home Zones Study Tour, ably organised and led by Sustrans and Graham Smith of Oxford Brookes University.

The mix of people and the mix of places (Utrecht, Houten, Culemborg, Den Haag, Rijswijk and Delft in three days!) was exciting, stimulating, and fun. We met people from local and central government, and were personally inspired by one of the pioneers of "woonerven" (Home Zones) - Joost Vahl. It was also very easy to engage with local people and discuss the realities of woonerf life with them.

Joost Vahl's starting point in his vision of a different mode of urban living was children and children's play. It is important to remember that amidst all the highly technical talk of road humps and junctions!

Woonerven (or 'erven' as they're now known), aren't enclaves at odds with their wider physical and cultural environment, but a coherent part of it.



Home Zone in Utrecht, The Netherlands

This environment is also the result of a "compact city" policy maximising commercial and residential development in existing conurbations, with public transport routes. For those of us who rely on our cars to get around, it was exhilarating to travel by bike, tram and double decker train.

I was struck by the diversity of locations we saw. Although there is a legal definition of a "woonerf", in practice there are variations. Woonerven themselves are products of very different localities – old, new, small town, city centre etc – with a strong sense of place. This plurality and appreciation of difference is something we need to absorb and take away with us, so that whatever's created in Scotland is really ours and not a half digested and insipid copy of someone else's.

Safe Roads Safe Play Campaign

Rachelle McPherson of Phoenix Health Project and Craigend Resource Centre writes on how Home Zones can address local concerns.

"Home Zones" is a concept that simultaneously addresses the related issues of road traffic and safe play areas.

We in Greenock formed our campaign after becoming concerned about the volume of traffic on our local streets and the lack of safe play areas for our children. We realized we were all experiencing stress because we were unable to let our children play outside.

The resulting lack of physical exercise and opportunities for safe play is also having a detrimental effect on our children's physical and mental development. We hope that the Home Zones pilots will be extended so that areas such as ours can benefit.



Home Zone in Delft

Success!

Colin Howden of TRANSform Scotland reports on the inclusion of a Home Zones amendment in the Transport (Scotland) Bill

December's debate on the Transport Bill saw the campaign for Home Zones in Scotland take a significant step forward when an amendment on Home Zones was included in the Bill. In January the Bill passed into law as the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

The inclusion of the Home Zones amendment represents a welcome change of heart from the Scottish Executive which had previously resisted calls made by the Home Zones Network for such an amendment. Indeed, this was one of the few topics where the Executive beefed up the measures rather than diluting them.

The amendment was accepted at the final stage (Stage 3) of the Bill. At the Bill's committee stage (Stage 2), amendments put forward by MSPs Donald Gorrie (SLD) and Robin Harper (SGP) had attracted cross-party support from members of the Transport and Environment Committee. The Gorrie amendment was withdrawn on the understanding that the Executive would come forward with its own proposals. The Executive's amendment, in the name of Nora Radcliffe (SLD), drew unanimous support.



Ormlie, Thurso.

The provisions in the Act will allow local authorities to designate areas as Home Zones. However there still remain questions as to whether the provisions allow for Home Zones like those seen on the continent. That the continental Home Zones signage can't be used in

the UK, suggests that we haven't got everything in place quite yet. The guidance that the Scottish Executive will publish on Home Zones is now crucial. It is important that it makes clear provision for pedestrian priority in Home Zones; otherwise there is a danger that the Executive could devalue the Home Zones concept.

further reading

Our report "Reclaiming Residential Streets for People" (22pp), published following our November 1999 conference, is available from us for £7.50.

"Home Zone News", a three-times yearly newsletter published by the Children's Play Council, provides a wealth of contacts and resources on Home Zones. To get on their mailing list contact them on 020 7843 6016 or homezones@ncb.org.uk

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The Home Zones for Scotland Network is coordinated by:



Join us in the campaign for Home Zones!

The fact that there are designated pilot Home Zone areas being officially monitored and evaluated should encourage other communities and local authorities to proceed. Indeed, the Transport Bill, by putting Home Zones on a legal footing, gives more than tacit support for such moves.

In our next newsletter, we want to publicise other areas where Home Zones are being implemented or considered. If this is you, please get in touch to let us know how we can help.

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