**THE LEITH PROGRAMME**

**Programme overview.**

The Council, in partnership with Sustrans Scotland, is to deliver an ambitious design for Leith Walk up to Picardy Place, as part of “The Leith Programme”. The design seeks to transform an ‘arterial road’ into a simplified, safe and vibrant community streetscape with space reassigned to pedestrians and cyclists. Enhanced facilities for cyclists and pedestrians would help the Council to meet its own targets for cycling and walking, and contribute to the Scottish Government’s vision of 10% of all trips by bike by 2020, as set out in the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.

The design priorities for the scheme responds to the local communities’ aspirations for the streets as expressed to the Council through a consultation process in 2012/13, and to the Government’s Designing Streets hierarchy of users. Consultation showed strong support for a much more visionary, strategic and bold approach to the environmental aspects of The Leith Programme than original proposals, especially in regard to improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists along the route and achieving connectivity for the scheme.

The Leith Programme covers an area of 2.7km length in total. Improvements on Constitution Street were completed in November 2013, involving reconfiguration of the junction at Bernard and Baltic Street. The Minister for Transport and Veterans confirmed funding of up to £3.6M towards delivery cycle enhancements along the remaining 1.8km between Foot of the Walk to Picardy Place. Combined with an available £5.5M from the Council towards only construction, means a programme in excess of £9.1M.

**Leith Walk – understanding the place.**Leith Walk is a well established shopping and residential street :-

* nearly 300 independent, locally owned businesses offer a wide range of goods and services
* the front doors of nearly 1,100 households (mainly tenements) open onto the street.
* the main travel connection between the Leith’s waterfront and the city centre.
* 1,300 buses per day along the northern half of Leith Walk;
* 3,000 buses per day between London Road and Picardy Place;
* around 7,000 pedestrians use the street each day (2011 / 12 figures; this will be higher now)
- seven primary schools are located between 50 and 900m from Leith Walk, two special schools within 1 km, and two high schools within 600m of Leith Walk;
* numerous places of worship and social and cultural amenities located along and within 200 metres of Leith Walk.

**Features of the Leith Programme design**

Leith Programme has two distinct characters to its road layout and cycling provision, reflecting the two distinct characters and ‘building to building’ widths evident along the street. In the northern (bottom) half of Leith Walk, the design narrows the road to one general traffic lane in each direction, with on-road 1.75m wide cycle lanes and .0.5m buffer between cycle lanes and parked cars. Along this section, there is regular provision of zebra crossings, a number of informal crossing points and a pelican crossing near Lorne Street, near the main entrance to Lorne Primary School .

In the southern (top) half, the design’s key proposals include taking advantage of the additional width between buildings to provide separated (off-road) cycle track in the up hill direction into town. There is a desire to provided some two way track near the Omni Centre. Some detail with regards to managing the cycle track and pedestrian movement at the London Road area is still required.

Features of the enhanced scheme include:

* clear pedestrian priority over 1.8km, including safer crossing points;
* significant sections of uninterrupted cycle space (both dedicated on and off road sections);
* reduction in unnecessary road space and wider footways;
* redesigned, simplified junctions;
* largely segregated cycle provision from Pilrig Street uphill for around 1km to Picardy Place;
* two-way segregated cycle provision from Annandale Street to the Omni centre;
* replacement of London Rd roundabout with a signalled junction to significantly enhance conditions for both pedestrians and cyclists;
* 1.75m wide cycle lane provision on the road from Foot of the Walk to Dalmeny Street (into town) and Pilrig Street to Jane Street (out of town);
* widened bus lanes for use by both buses and cyclists on the approaches to Pilrig Street and the Foot of the Walk;
* narrower road environment with frequent zebra crossings, with a design that supports slower speed limits;
* a simplified streetscape more conducive to community activity, trading and business; and
* better connectivity for sustainable forms of travel between the waterfront and the city centre.

**Connectivity of the scheme**

The Leith Programme can offer a number of opportunities for the improvement of overall cycle network in the city. Officers are in the early stages of discussing how these links are best achieved. These include, amongst others:

* links to the Seafield Portobello cycle route, to bring cyclists safely into Leith Walk;
* links through Picardy Place to George Street;
* links to Calton Road accessible entrance to Waverley Train Station and cycle parking area;
* improved link between Leith Walk and the St Mark’s park entrance to the north Edinburgh cycle network.

A travel behaviour change programme is planned to take place over a two year period starting 2015, to support a high intensity programme of travel behaviour change covering 10,000 households in area surrounding Leith Walk. Preliminary planning is underway between Sustrans and City of Edinburgh Council.

**Appendix 1. Census findings uphold design principles**

The findings of the 2011 Census affirm the agreed hierarchy of users on the street and the design principles for the Leith Programme:

* Leith Walk has the highest population density in Edinburgh. Nearly 26,000 people reside within an 800 metre radius (density of 12,900 persons per sq.km.); higher than anywhere else in Scotland, including Glasgow.
* Since 2001 there has been a very significant growth of population in the areas surrounding Leith Walk (up to 30% increase); a result of new house building on brownfield land and refurbishment of existing properties.
* Edinburgh wide, there have been significant changes in travel choices between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, with a shift to sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling and public transport). This is a reversal of previous long-term trends and contrary to the current national trend.
* The proportion of households with a car fell very slightly from 60.5% to 60.1% between 2001 and 2011, following a long period of growth (38% in 1971, 46% in 1981, 54% in 1991). The number of households without a car increased by 8,000 during this period, and is now higher than at any time since the 1970s.
* The proportion of Edinburgh residents who drive to work fell from 44.2% to 41.0% between 2001 and 2011, reversing the long established upward trend prior to 2001. Edinburgh is the only local authority area in Scotland where this reversal occurred.
* Cycling to work has grown continuously since 1981; at nearly 5% of all journeys to work it is now a mainstream travel mode in the city. The recent growth of cycling in Edinburgh has been well ahead of the national trend.
* Walking to work has also grown in popularity after an initial fall in 1981 / 1991. The proportion walking to work now stands at over 18% compared with 15% in 1991. Walking also increased in the other Scottish cities, although across the rest of Scotland it declined between 2001 and 2011.