

SPOKES

The Lothian Cycle Campaign

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Demonstration Cycle Ride for Politicians and Senior Officers, June 17th 2010 **[updated version]**

Please note: We will stop for brief talk/discussion at the 10 locations marked below. This will allow discussion of any locations just passed, and advance notice of what to look out for in the next section of the ride. However, to complete the ride in time, discussion should be brief. We will not have time to discuss in detail all the points described, but hopefully they will illustrate the kind of problems and opportunities affecting people travelling by bike.

Please take care when stopping so that those behind you have the time and space also to stop. Once stopped, take care not to obstruct traffic or pedestrians.

STOP/TALK AT CITY CHAMBERS [leaving 18.00]

a. **Up High St** - Note the useful smooth-slabbed level gutter which unintentionally allows pleasant cycling avoiding the setts – especially important if you don't have fat tyres. However, as you continue past Parliament Square a kerb appears, forcing you onto the cobbles. *Cycling was neglected in the design* – otherwise there could have been a (slightly wider) smooth strip the whole length of the High Street on both sides.

At the junction with George IV Bridge the setts are flat-topped and reasonably successful for cycling, even with narrow/small-wheel bikes.

b. **George IV Bridge** – After passing Chambers Street you enter a coloured cycle lane. *This should start before Chambers St, and take you across the Chambers Street exit* - this would give cyclists more confidence and make motorists more aware.

c. **Bristo Place** - Move into the central cycle lane, and note the excellent onroad coloured cycle facilities as you cycle around into Teviot Place.

d. **Turn left into Middle Meadow Walk.**

STOP/TALK AT TOP OF MMW

This is extremely busy with cyclists and walkers in the rush hour.

- ◆ Note non-flush kerb at the above turn, making turning hazardous for narrow or small-wheeled bikes - at a point where the cyclist needs to concentrate on pedestrians not on the road surface.
- ◆ Note that until 2-3 years ago there was a cyclist entry separate to the pedestrian one, just before the pillar, with a flush kerb. This entry was removed during repaving, forcing cyclists and pedestrians to share the one entrance/exit. On busy mornings the situation can be ridiculous, with large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists heading north, and at the same time southbound cyclists trying to weave their way through, whilst also negotiating the non-flush kerb. *Complaints to the council about the loss of the separate cycle entry were met by the response that for visual Streetscape reasons the lowered kerb which would allow a separate cycle entry would not be reinstated. Were cycling and pedestrian/cycle interaction even considered in the repaving scheme, or was it thought of only as appearance and maintenance???* Although reinstatement of the former cycle entry is the real solution, delineation of cyclist and pedestrian crossing points at the existing crossing would probably help somewhat, although the numbers in the morning rush hour make paint alone unlikely to solve everything.

e. **Turn left onto eastern section of North Meadow Walk**

- ◆ Note narrowness of this 2-way cycle path, which also accumulates puddles right across it in wet weather (this is significantly worse in the western section of North Meadow Walk, which is also very busy with walkers and cyclists in the rush hour).
- ◆ Note badly designed section next to playground - we know of 2 people who have fallen here in the autumn on slippery leaves at the bend around the playground fence.

STOP/TALK AT END OF NMW

f. **Turn right onto Buccleuch St** - follow the recently resurfaced central approach bike lane to the ASL - an excellent facility.

g. **Cycle straight across the junction** and stop at a safe distance up the road. Walk across the road,

STOP/TALK ON FAR PAVEMENT

Note the completely worn-out central approach cycle lane and ASL. A complete contrast to the other side, a bad message to cyclists and to motorists, and *showing the need for a more consistent maintenance regime*.

h. **Cycle along Melville Drive** – note new cycle lane

i. **At Marchmont Rd turn left**, then at toucan crossing left again onto the cycle path.

STOP/TALK AT MEADOW PLACE [expected time 18.30]

Note the improvement due to the newly closed-off Meadow Place.

j. **We are now on the main 'quiet route' from South Edinburgh to Princes St**. This is heavily used in the rush hour. Spokes counts show over 20% of rush-hour vehicles on Forrest Road to be bicycles.

k. **Cycle east along South Meadow Walk to Argyle Place, turning left onto Middle Meadow Walk** - note the recently installed flush kerb at this heavily used cycle entry/exit – a small cost for a useful improvement.

STOP/TALK AT TOP OF MMW

l. *Ideal location for a 'Public Bike Counter'* - as used in several European cities as publicity to promote cycle use - displaying the number of cyclists who have passed by that day, that month and that year.

m. **Forrest Road** - note lots of cycle parking, well-used in the working day.

n. **Hotel Missoni** – the poor initial road design has recently been improved significantly, but is still far from perfect – the majority of traffic over-rides the cycle lane where the lane bends left into the pavement indentation – this would be helped somewhat if the entire lane was coloured. But the basic problem is the extended pavement, to allow for a car pull-in, which results in a weird bendy cycle lane instead of a normal straight cycle lane. *We have heard it said that the car pull-in was originally not to be permitted (in line with council guidelines for new city centre buildings??) but was added after representations by the developers.*

Immediately prior to hotel Missoni, a good feature is the coloured cycle lane across the top of Victoria Street – but why is there no colour on the stretch between that and the High Street junction?

o. **Mound** – the newish double-yellow lines further down make for a safer ride, but remaining single yellows near the top force cyclists right out into the traffic, at a dangerous left bend, when cars are parked there.

p. **Foot of Mound** - the former left turn has been removed, making life harder for some cycle journeys. We understand that a cyclist left-turn is to be re-instated, but this is taking a very long time. *It should have been done at the time when the left turn ban for all traffic was instituted.*

q. **Dismount, turn left along Princes Street, and stop at the kerb before Frederick Street junction. Walk across Princes Street to the opposite pavement.**

STOP/TALK NEAR END OF FREDERICK ST [*expected time 18.50*]

Note that we walked across the road to avoid the difficulty of turning right across the tramlines.

Tramline crashes – Bicycle wheels can skid on tramlines or, if narrow, can get trapped. Several such crashes have already been reported to TIE – in at least two cases the fallen cyclist was almost run over by a bus, and in one of these cases the driver before jumping out of his cab thought he had in fact run over the cyclist. Whilst we expected that most tramline crashes would be at junctions, early experience shows that a common scenario is where a cyclist travelling along Princes Street is forced by unexpected traffic or other pressures to move sideways at short notice. We know of 2 cases where this happened due to traffic pressures, and one (the most serious above) where the cyclist (travelling between the tramlines) suddenly saw cobbles ahead and semi-instinctively moved left to avoid them.

Note the cobbles ahead – installed without any consultation with Spokes. *Was cyclist safety taken into account at all in this decision, and was it safety-audited* - or was it a subjective decision, based solely on appearance, that the delineation of the stop had to use cobbles? Cyclists using the left-hand bus/cycle carriageway have the choice now of waiting behind buses or overtaking over cobbles whilst squeezed between bus and tramline.

Notes on future of Princes Street and Picardy Place – A recent Spokes survey* of 100 regular everyday city cycle users identified the two most important corridors that need upgraded with high quality cycle provision as east-west through the city centre (primarily Princes Street) and Edinburgh-Leith. The same survey identified Picardy Place (which lies near the ends of both the above corridors) as easily the top cycling blackspot in the entire city. We have therefore highlighted these issues in our new Spokes Bulletin 107, summer 2010.*

Cllr Mackenzie and Marshall Poulton have both told Spokes public meetings that the forthcoming public consultation on Princes Street future will include an option of a traffic-free 2-way cycle facility on one side of the tram. The record of tramline crashes make us more certain than ever that this solution is vital.

r. **Continue along Princes St, then down Leith St to Picardy Place.**

STOP/TALK AT PICARDY PLACE

Even currently, this is a major confidence-sapping location for cyclists – see survey mentioned above. Yet it is a critical location, hard to avoid on very many cycle trips.

Cycling was not considered seriously by Planning Dept in preparation of the draft Picardy Place masterplan, with no mention at all in the draft; and in the final version no details, but an admission that cycling provision “is yet to be finalised.” Onroad facilities were developed separately by transport and TIE, with failure to integrate Planning to provide a holistic solution, which might include some onroad and some offroad. The hints we receive from officers are that space is very tight due to the desire to retain high traffic capacity, the planned hotel and the tramline, and therefore provision for cyclists may be less than ideal.

Several vital route directions will remain difficult and frightening for many cyclists under the proposed arrangements. These include Broughton St to Leith St, Leith Walk to York Place, and access to the tram stop from some directions.

Spokes has written to Cllr Mackenzie* suggesting that the requirement to maintain current motor traffic levels be reduced, to allow a simpler non- gyratory junction. This would provide great deal more space for cycle-friendly provision, and a better pedestrian environment. Traffic counts by Spokes over the last 4 years (at other central locations) suggest that private car traffic into the city centre has declined every year – with a further significant drop this year, despite the reopenings at the Mound and Lothian Road. The council should lock in this benefit by putting pedestrians and cyclists at the top when designing Picardy Place – as is a requirement of the new Scottish Government guidance, *Designing Streets*.

Outline approval for St James Centre includes conditions requiring cyclist access and through-routes - good - but much will depend on Planning Department insistence when detailed plans submitted.

s. Cycle along York Place then left up into St Andrews Square.

STOP/TALK AT ST ANDREWS SQUARE [probably North St Andrew Street]

Under the tram plans, facilities will be provided to allow cyclists to turn safely from York Place into North St Andrew Street [a simple turn will not be possible as the tram lines will be too near the pavement].

However, at the other end of St Andrews Square, cyclists are to be banned travelling down to Princes Street under TIE's existing proposals. Spokes has proposed a simple solution, very similar to TIE's above plans for North St Andrew Street.

t. Turn right into Princes St then left along Waverley Bridge.

u. Up Market Street (walk??)

Note the double-yellow lines uphill on Market Street. It is essential to retain these, and not install car parking as proposed under the CPZ draft Order. Indeed, a cycle lane would be of great benefit going up Market Street. For obvious reasons, cyclists travel slowly up Market Street, and need protection from faster uphill motor traffic, not getting pushed right out into the traffic by parked cars - risking frustrated motorists being held up behind the 5mph uphill cyclist.

CITY CHAMBERS [expected time 19.30]

***FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST ...**

The Spokes survey of 100 regular city cyclists, Spokes Bulletin 107, and our letter about Picardy Place to Cllr Mackenzie are all available in paper or electronic form on request by email from davedufeu@gmail.com.

**THANK YOU FOR COMING ALONG TODAY – WE HOPE YOU FOUND IT USEFUL-
PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS.**