

EDINBURGH CANAL STRATEGY – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: COMMENTS FROM SPOKES

SPOKES welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation document.

1. The canal towpath is extensively used by cyclists for both recreational and other journeys. Taken with the Colinton/Balerno cycle path, which it links into, it provides opportunities for cycling in an attractive and motor traffic free environment for long distances from the centre of Edinburgh to the south western edge. It is a considerable asset for both cyclists and the community as a whole.
2. SPOKES has encouraged the BWB and Edinburgh Council to positively manage and develop the towpath for safe cycling for families and others for over 30 years, well before it became more widely recognised as an asset rather than just an industrial relic. The improvements in the surfacing have been an important step forward in allowing full use to be made of its potential.
3. SPOKES believes that further improvements should be considered where possible, including:
 - creating more access points (especially in the section between Harrison Park and the canal basin);
 - improving existing access points to make them more evenly graded for cyclists and other users;
 - installing low impact lighting as the towpath is extensively used in the early evenings in winter and there is a particular danger of collisions;
 - improving any remaining stretches without a satisfactory hard surface;
 - exploring the options for widening the towpath, for example, between Ashley Terrace and the access point to the Colinton cycle path, by cutting back on the surrounding vegetation.

SPOKES was pleased to learn that CEC has already commissioned a study to identify options for improvements along the canal towpath including low impact lighting. We consider that the strategy should include a commitment to active consideration and implementation of a programme of improvements of the sort mentioned above.

4. SPOKES recognises that increasing use of the towpath by a wide range of users has brought its own problems although the extent of these can easily be exaggerated. SPOKES supports the principle of courteous behaviour by all users including, but not limited to, cyclists. Although SPOKES would be strongly opposed to any attempts to single out cyclists for criticism, we would be happy to contribute constructively to any guidance, information or code of practice that might be developed to help prevent conflicts between users. We would also be happy to consider disseminating any such advisory material to our members in due course.