

Note of Extra Planning Group Meeting – 27 June 2017

Martin had instigated the meeting to talk about ways to maximise our influence and effectiveness given the new Council and its apparent sympathies for active travel and also to follow up on general discussions from a couple of previous meetings.

Attending were Sandy, Martin, Alec, Stephan, Richard and Euan.

The new administration's early comments on Active travel and Stephan's contact with the new Transport Convenor (one of his local Councillors) are very encouraging. This said it was noted that commitments to timing of the implementation of the East West city centre route and the wording of the Princes St commitment's to active travel had changed from the original in the motion going to Thursday's Council meeting. The major change was the removal of a commitment to a cycle lane on Princes St.

It was thought that developing correspondence to send to the New convenor would help set out Spokes priorities at this time.

It was agreed that the development of a joined up cycling network, particularly in the City Centre should continue to be our main priority with the Council. Existing Council commitments were vital

- Roseburn to Picardy Place
- Leith Walk and Leith St
- Canal to Meadows

However important missing links were

- Lothian Road
- Picardy Place

We disagree with the Council's Leith St proposals and noted that there is only room for one bus at a time to go through the top of the junction so two general traffic lanes on the rest of the street is not relevant to assisting the effectiveness of bus services as the Council have suggested.

Also lacking from the Council has been tram safety action. Crossing the tracks at the foot of Lothian Road(and joining up to Charlotte Square/Queensferry Rd) and at Waverley Bridge are considered to be priorities, as well as Leith Street to The Bridges, though not a tram issue.

A number of areas were identified where the Council could do much better.

The small size of the active travel team was identified as a major constraint. Council staff are obviously at capacity and timescales slip, projects languish (eg Russell Road to the Canal), yet there needs to be better progress and more projects. We need to ask for a significant expansion to the active travel team. This should cover establishing standards for ensuring that all road developments of a significant nature should include appropriate improvements to cycling infrastructure.

Council Consultations were identified as unsatisfactory in a number of ways

- At local level there continue to be failures to consult the cycling community at all (Magdalene Glen, Fountainbridge). They know to consult communities of place but ignore communities of interest. Sometimes the Active Travel team are also guilty (Right turn from Leith Walk to McDonald Road)
- No response is provided on why our suggestions are often not implemented and we often only find out when projects are delivered on the ground. We should ask that feedback is given for all formal consultations and the actions that are taken subsequently prior to implementation.

Although we think a central active travel team is protected we realise that the role of Localities are very important and we want to see capabilities to consider and execute good quality cycling infrastructure improved there. One idea that could well help develop interest there would be to allocate funds to each locality for them to tackle priority active travel issues. Because of current competency limitations, we think the full range of possibilities should be limited at this time to bike parking and dropped kerbs.

Although it was agreed it was too early for the new Convenor to be fixing new "Cycle Forum" type arrangements. We should register our dissatisfaction with many aspects of the Active Travel Forum – lack of forewarning / consultation on topics of business, not frequent enough with too little cycling business, lack of involvement of member organisations in setting priorities.

Other Business

We queried whether there was a council policy re abandoned bikes.

We agreed that we need a way of managing issues/ dropped kerb requests/ cycle parking/ small improvements (eg from the Summer Competition).

A "projects" list with the status of each project might be a way to kick-start discussions.

There was some interest in setting up local cycling groups to deal with issues in their localities. "Infrastructure safaris"/ route walks & audits / councillor rides all seem to work well and are a way of getting local members and interested members of the public involved. Stephan and Martin are considering for their areas (Gilmerton & The Inch / New Town East). This might work well through Community Councils and feed into the new Neighbourhood Locality ways of working.

We agreed that we need to be more proactive and to look for ways to facilitate this.

Martin agreed to try again to get a meeting with Anna Herriman - the City Centre Programme Manager.

Further to a recent email conversation which touched on the capabilities of Open Street Map, Stephan has enough knowledge to edit maps and he agreed to lead a workshop sometime in the near future to develop skills and knowledge of other Spokes Members. A venue with a large screen would be helpful for this purpose.