

# SPOKES

*The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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**To:** Councillors on the Policy and Strategy Committee

Dear Councillor

I am writing in advance of the Committee on Tuesday when you will be discussing the report, *City Centre and Princes Street Public Realm* which is the outcome of the recent work by Gehl architects for the city. We strongly welcome much of this report, but have some concerns as below. Overleaf we suggest some amendments to the Committee report.

## 1. THE GEHL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1a. We attended the seminar last autumn by David Sim of Gehl, and compliment the council on appointing this firm. Their recent booklet *Our Cities Ourselves* is truly inspirational [[www.gehlarchitects.com](http://www.gehlarchitects.com)]. We note that despite the great success of many of their projects in New York, Europe, and elsewhere around the world, their ideas are radical and require courage to implement, although the incremental approach can help .

1b. Although we attended the seminar, we have not yet seen Gehl's report to the City, as this is not yet online, and is only available in the councillors' offices. **However, given the strong emphasis on cycling as well as walking at the Gehl seminar, and the Council's Charter of Brussels target of 15% of trips by bike in 2020, we are surprised at the comparatively low profile of cycling in the official report to Committee.**

1c. For example, according to our notes taken at the seminar, Gehl Director David Sim said Princes Street "*has huge potential for cycling*" and there should be "*many more bikes*" there (as well as in George Street). This does not come over in the report to Committee where the only relevant mention is the box in 3.10 which states that Princes Street could be "*easier to cycle.*"

1d. Clearly Gehl's views are not cycling for its own sake, but to maximise access to shops, the gardens, public spaces and elsewhere in and through the city centre, by a transport mode which is quiet, safe and space-efficient.

1e. At the seminar David Sim also recommended a study into cycling opportunities and how these should be developed, presumably particularly in the city centre.

## 2. PRINCES STREET - OTHER FACTORS

2a. There is a continuing toll of **cyclist minor-injury crashes** due to wheels trapped in tramlines (roughly 3 such crashes per month are being reported). Many of these crashes would not happen if motor traffic was not present, or was much reduced. They are often not the fault of the driver (indeed Lothian Bus drivers have been complimented by several crash victims) but it is the very presence of the vehicles which makes the cyclist move sideways, or turn across tramlines at a non-optimal angle. The toll of crashes will therefore likely decline significantly with less vehicles present.

2b. Last year the Council adopted the very welcome *Active Travel Action Plan (ATAP)*. Its cycling element concentrates on two themes - improving the main onroad routes from the suburbs to the centre, and secondly improving the largely off-road 'Family Network.' Throughout, Spokes has pointed out one weakness in ATAP - that it gives too little thought to the very centre of the city - yet that is the destination and/or crossing point for many of the trips which are otherwise being encouraged and made safer by ATAP.

2c. The report to Committee suggests [3.13] a 'cycle lane' in George Street, but not Princes Street, thereby giving an impression that George St is considered the main east-west route for cyclists. We however totally concur with David Sim of Gehl that **Princes Street is equally important - or indeed more important.** For any particular journey or destination, one or other Street will be safer to approach and use - and we strongly suspect that cycle usage is considerably higher already in Princes St, as it serves more journeys directly and is easier and safer to access. George Street also has many more conflicting traffic movements all along it and at each end.

2d. Councillors periodically talk enthusiastically of a '**Velib**' scheme, like Paris or London. Such a scheme cannot be realistic on a sufficient scale, and sufficiently attractive to visitors, unless the heart of the city is, looks and feels much more cycle-friendly than now - including specifically Edinburgh's prime destination, Princes Street.

2e. One specific in ATAP is the proposal for **Rose Street** to be part of the 'Family Network' of family-friendly routes [it has been open to careful cyclists ever since pedestrianised]. We note that cycling is not mentioned in the Rose Street box in 3.10 of the Report to Committee - surely consistency is needed.

### **3. SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO THE COMMITTEE REPORT**

3a. Long-term project 4 should specifically state, "*including Princes Street*" [see comments 2c and 2d above].

3b. Para 3.12 should specifically state that cycling conditions in Princes Street will be greatly enhanced and a cycle route considered [comments 2c and 2d above].

3c. The boxes in section 3.10 relating to Princes St and George St, which currently say "*Easier to cycle*" should be more enthusiastically worded - in the same way that the pedestrian vision sounds enthusiastic and exciting. For example, "*Safe and welcoming for getting around by bicycle.*"

3d. The Rose Street box in 3.10 should say that Rose Street will remain a shared-use space available to slow-speed cyclists, as in ATAP [comment 2e above]

3e. Reference should be made in the report, and a short-term action added, on the need for convenient cycle parking, to encourage people to visit the central area by bike for shopping and lingering. Lack of city centre bike stands is a frequent complaint, particularly following the otherwise welcome removal of guardrail. We also note that the Committee report has no short-term cycling actions at all, yet cycle parking is urgent and much-needed.

3f. Gehl architects should be asked to make cycling recommendations for the City Centre, tying these into the Council's Active Travel Action Plan [comments 1e and 2b above].

We hope these comments are useful and can be considered by the Committee.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu  
for Spokes