

Leithers join forces with active travel groups to call for major changes to Leith revamp plan

Leith community organisations have joined forces with active travel campaign groups to demand that the council rethink its proposals for a multi-million pound facelift of Leith Walk and Constitution Street.

In an unprecedented joint submission to the council's Leith Improvement Programme, all three community councils, three further Leith based community organisations, The Cockburn Association and four active travel organisations have teamed up to try to persuade the city council to do far more to boost the economic vitality of the area - by improving the public realm, and tackling the road safety and air pollution problems that affect the area.

Drawing on an extensive community-led consultation process that saw hundreds of Leithers share their priorities for the redevelopment of Leith Walk, some of the key actions the groups have backed include:

- A 20mph speed limit to be applied to the length of Leith Walk to boost road safety.
- A complete redesign of many of the key junctions to make the street more pedestrian and cycle friendly.
- A zero tolerance approach to managing bins and redundant signage to get rid of the street clutter that blights the street.
- The installation of a protected bike lane on the full length of the southbound carriageway so that cyclists aren't squeezed between buses and fast moving traffic as they travel uphill.
- An overhaul of the parking arrangements on the street to encourage more people to shop on the street and put a stop to dangerous double parking.
- The return of the "Elm Row pigeons" and a redesign of the public space at the Foot of the Walk.

The joint response was "crowdsourced" as part of a unique process that was coordinated by local charity Greener Leith. In total 11 different organisations put their name to the final document.

Commenting on the response, Greener Leith Chair Charlotte Encombe said: "Putting this document together has been a huge job and I would like to thank everyone who worked on it and took the time to contribute.

"Thanks to this unprecedented joining of forces there is now a single and unambiguous document that clearly sets out local priorities and aspirations for Leith Walk in detail.

"We urge the city council to raise their aspirations for Leith Walk and Constitution Street. They must spend the millions that are earmarked for repairing and upgrading the street on a design that makes Leith Walk far safer, more accessible, and economically sustainable for all."

Roland Reid, Secretary of Leith Central Community Council, added: "Leith Walk is not only one of Edinburgh's top three streets, it is also the key artery running through one of the most densely populated areas in the city.

"We are pleased to be part of a joint submission with so many other local and national organisations and hope that it will contribute to the revival of the vitality of Leith Walk that has suffered so much since the start of the tram works in 2007."

Dave du Feu, of the Spokes, the Lothians Cycle Campaign said: "Spokes is delighted to have worked with Greener Leith and others to come up with ideas to make Leith Walk a safer and more attractive street for shopping and other everyday uses, rather than feeling like just a corridor for motor traffic."

"Figures from Edinburgh Council's *Active Travel Action Plan* suggest that Leith is already Edinburgh's second busiest area for bicycle use and we believe that these proposals would build on this by making Leith Walk feel much safer and more welcoming for getting anyone going out by bike.

"This would make a big contribution to the Council's bold target that 10% of all journeys are by bike in 2020. We therefore urge the Council to adopt the ideas in this joint submission.

"Spokes also congratulates Greener Leith on the extent and effectiveness of its consultation with the public and with other groups, such as Spokes and the local Community Councils. This is surely a first!"

The full document, that runs to 42 pages, aims to highlight improvements that the council could make to its draft design proposals for Leith Walk and Constitution Street. It is available online here: <http://bit.ly/13tku4Y>

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. More detail on the council Leith Programme consultation are available here: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20056/city_centre_and_leith_neighbourhood/1788/leith_programme_2012-2014/1
2. The results of the community-led "Vision for Leith Walk" consultation that informed this response are here: <http://www.greenerleith.org/greener-leith-news/2012/11/9/vision-for-leith-walk-final-report.html>
3. Additional Quotes:

Fay Young of Leith Open Space said: “Leith Open Space is delighted to support this opportunity to fulfil Leith Walk's potential as a creative, safe and welcoming public space where people can enjoy walking, working, living, meeting, shopping and having fun.”

Cyclists' Touring Club Scotland Chairman Dr Chris Oliver supports the joint leith walk consultation recommendations, "the joint plan is very sensible and should be supported"

4. Full list of supporting organisations:

Leith Community Councils

- Leith Central Community Council
- Leith Harbour and Newhaven Community Council
- Leith Links Community Council

Leith Voluntary Organisations

- Greener Leith
- Leith Open Space
- Friends of the Water of Leith Basin

Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations

- The Cockburn Association
- Spokes - The Lothians' Cycle Campaign

Scottish Voluntary Organisations

- Living Streets Scotland
- Pedal on Parliament
- Cyclists' Touring Club Scotland