



Fiona Hyslop,
Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

13th November 2015

Dear Ms Hyslop,

Future of safe access and active travel provision in Holyrood Park

In response to public concerns and injuries sustained by visitors¹, Living Streets Edinburgh is writing on behalf of ten local and national charities to ask Historic Environment Scotland to review visitor access and safety arrangements in Holyrood Park.

We believe that vehicular transport considerations have gained priority over the key functions of this national asset. Furthermore the City of Edinburgh Council's plans to introduce a 20mph speed limit² to nearly all surrounding roads will leave the Park as an anomaly: its extensive 30mph zone, in which there are no safe pedestrian crossings, will further encourage its use as a fast through-route for vehicles.

A rethink of traffic management in the Park is urgently needed if it is to support the policy priorities of both the Scottish Government and The City of Edinburgh Council.

Living Streets Edinburgh Group
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The Scottish Government has made high level commitments to promoting outdoors play for children, and active travel for all. The relevant Planning Advice Note states that green and civic spaces should be designed for ease of access, particularly for groups such as older people, parents with pushchairs and disabled people.³ This includes the statement: *"Open space designers, planners and managers should be aware of the potential to improve the quality of our environment and create long-lasting, beautiful places of which we can be proud."*⁴

The key outcome of the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland was that Scotland's heritage should make a strong contribution to the wellbeing of the nation and its people.⁵ The City of Edinburgh Council has researched the value of city parks: in all the hundreds of interviews conducted, people described their ability to visit parks made a huge difference to their quality of life. When asked to place a value on their park, the most common response was "it's priceless".⁶ In this context, we are pleased Historic Scotland recognizes Holyrood Park as a much-loved escape from urban life⁷. However, for many people there are obstacles in their way when they try to make use of the Park. Pedestrians and cyclists are brought into danger and conflict by the speed and volume of traffic, lack of safe road crossings, and narrow 'shared use' paths.

Too much of the Park is dominated – visually and in terms of accessibility, air quality and noise – by vehicular traffic using the Park as a through route. Despite the road system frequently intersecting the path network, there is only a single zebra crossing in the entire Park. In addition, pedestrians and cyclists are forced to share narrow paths, creating additional conflict and hazards.

The result is a visitor experience that is more like a busy main road than an "escape from urban life". Holyrood Park is unique, iconic and loved, and it deserves much better.

We want it to be a safer place for walking, cycling and play, but this requires the relationship between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic to be rebalanced. Investment in well-designed infrastructure could transform the Park into a place that can be accessed easily and safely by anybody, regardless of age or ability.

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Holyrood Park, with its high number of international visitors, could become a European exemplar for the successful urban park – an appropriate ambition considering its proximity to the Scottish Parliament. By improving safe access for all to this exceptional green space and by overhauling the provision for active travel, Historic Scotland could promote social justice and environmental sustainability in the heart of the capital.

We urge Historic Environment Scotland and the Scottish Government to work together, along with local communities and like-minded organizations, to develop a comprehensive traffic management plan that prioritizes walking, cycling and the safe enjoyment of Holyrood Park for everyone.

We look forward to your response, and would welcome the opportunity to meet you or your official to begin the process of unlocking the Park's potential.

Yours sincerely;

David Spaven, Convener **Living Streets Edinburgh**

Brian Sloan, Chief Executive, **Age Scotland**

Stuart Hay, Director, **Living Streets Scotland**

Jane Horsburgh, Policy Manager, **Guide Dogs Scotland**

Ian Findlay, Chief Officer, **Paths For All**

Jess Dolan, Director, **Ramblers Scotland**

Ross Macfadyen, Interim Director, **RNIB Scotland**

Richard Grant, **Spokes The Lothian Cycle Campaign**

John Lauder, National Director, **Sustrans Scotland**

Colin Howden, Director, **Transform Scotland**

Notes and references

1

<http://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search>

2

City of Edinburgh Council 'Map of proposed 20mph streets'

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http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20243/20mph_for_edinburgh/1240/map_of_proposed_20mph_streets

3,4

Planning Advice Note: PAN 65 Planning and Open Space
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2008/05/30100623/7>

5

Our Place in Time - The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/03/8522>

6

The Value of City of Edinburgh Council's Parks
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks_and_green_spaces/1300/the_value_of_city_of_edinburgh_councils_parks

7

Historic Scotland publication 'Investigating Holyrood Park'
<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/investigating-holyrood-park.pdf>

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