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Cllr Lesley Macinnes
City of Edinburgh, TEC Convener

cc: Councillors on TEC and for City Centre ward

6 December 2017 *[NB this letter, as sent, was inadvertently dated 2018! No other changes have been made]*

Dear Cllr Macinnes

CONTINUING THE LEITH STREET CLOSURE

Leith Street is currently closed to all motor traffic for a 10 month period during St James roadworks. We are writing to suggest that, once the works are complete, Leith Street above Calton Road should remain closed to motor traffic other than buses (and possibly taxis) at least until such time as the [City Centre Transformation process](#) outcomes are clear, and perhaps beyond, depending on those outcomes.

If this is to happen then the Council will need to act soon so as to have time to put in place the necessary Orders.

We are therefore emailing to ask you to consider this and, if you agree, discuss with colleagues so that measures can be put in place in time if this is agreed. Ideally decisions would be taken at the special Picardy Place TEC on 25 January, given that Leith Street and Picardy are intimately related.

As regards motor traffic under our proposal, we appreciate that traffic between Picardy and Calton Road would probably remain for the time being, and there would also be car access from Picardy to the new St James car park once that is opened. Also, the situation in Leith Street may change in future as a result of Transformation decisions – as one example, if it was decided to ban N-S motor traffic at the Mound, then some Leith Street car access might be unavoidable at that time.

It is our impression that the current diversions as a result of Leith Street closure are working fairly well, and it seems probable that some drivers are now using alternative modes or alternative destinations rather than detouring. For example, the [recent Spokes traffic count](#) at Forrest Road/ George IV Bridge found some increase in motor traffic, but less than might have been expected. Additionally, once Leith Street is reopened to buses, pressure on the diversionary routes will reduce further as they will be relieved not just of moving buses but of the congestion resulting from additional buses at stops (such as at North St David Street). If nonetheless there is still any rat-running through New Town residential streets, then local closures could be implemented. Spokes [had requested](#) early this year that traffic monitoring should be undertaken early on in affected streets, with a view to a continuing Leith Street closure.

Given all the above, it would be unfortunate to re-introduce traffic, at least until the Transformation outcomes are decided, into what could be a really pleasant Leith Street pedestrian area. Why re-habituate drivers to using Leith Street when the Transformation could require them out of it again in the foreseeable future?

Additionally, our proposal would also allow a cyclist route to be maintained up to the top of Leith Street rather than the existing much appreciated route being removed. As long ago as mid October, we saw [a tweet](#) suggesting that the current 'temporary' Leith Street cycle lane was encouraging more people to cycle – perhaps some are even former drivers on that route! – and asking for it to become permanent. The tweet was RT'd 18 times and liked 41 times.

How to achieve the above would need to be decided by the Council - we are not legal experts. Options might include a further TTRO (Temporary TRO) or an ETRO (Experimental TRO). However, since Leith Street lies within the St James envelope, developer approval might be required for our proposal. If that proved a stumbling block, an alternative would be an ETRO creating a bus gate at the top entrance into Leith Street, just outside the developer envelope.

Finally, we should mention that the points in this letter are separate from (though somewhat related to) the Leith Street TRO & RSO which are currently out for objection (Spokes will be submitting a detailed objection to the Orders shortly).

We hope our ideas can be considered carefully and look forward to hearing from you.

Dave du Feu + Martin McDonnell
Spokes