

If replying by email, please use... davedufeu@gmail.com

Cllr Lesley Macinnes
Convener
Transport & Environment Committee
City of Edinburgh

19.2.18

Dear Lesley

We are writing to express our disappointment at the large and growing list of cycle and walking projects that are delayed - some very substantially, and including both major and small projects. Although we have been concerned about this for some time, we are prompted to write now because of recent letters from the Council indicating that many of the wide range of projects consulted on in 2016 and 2017 have now also been put on hold.

PUBLIC CONCERN

There is growing concern, not just from Spokes but also in the wider cycling community (e.g. as seen on social media) that despite Edinburgh's UK-beating 10% cycle budget, there has been too little to see for it in the last couple of years, particularly in central areas - though we appreciate that work has been done in outer areas, such as at [Gilmerton](#) and the [A8 path](#). However, considerable sums in the last two years, not to mention staff time, have gone on project planning and extensive consultations - only for many of those projects now to be added to the list of projects already on hold.

Furthermore, it is demoralising for volunteer organisations, as well as many interested individuals, to invest very large amounts of time and effort into responding to consultations, vetting them in great detail and suggesting improvements, then perhaps see a consultation report showing resulting proposed enhancements, but then hear that the whole thing is to be filed away for some indefinite period.

REASONS FOR DELAYS

We understand that the main cause of delays is not capital funds but staff recruitment and retention.

We get the impression that recruitment processes are very slow - for example, although Community Links Plus funding can be used towards staff - and that is probably essential! - we believe staff have not yet been recruited to manage either the MGS or WEATN projects, which the Council won last September. Similarly, Callum Smith who managed the CCWEL project left some months ago. Since these three projects, perhaps rightly, are the Council's top priority AT projects, staff have had to be transferred to them, thus putting other projects on hold for indefinite periods.

As one suggestion, we wonder whether the officer time invested in consultation is perhaps excessive for the more minor schemes, such as some of those recently delayed. Even minor cycle schemes currently have a first consultation, then a second consultation, then a third opportunity if TROs/RSOs are required. Perhaps where TROs and/or RSOs are required for a minor scheme, the second consultation could be made stakeholder-only, since public comments/ objections will still be possible at the Orders stage.

The consultation process for minor schemes also contrasts incomprehensibly with some more major schemes - such as Picardy, where without your intervention there would have been very little effective consultation at all! Also, Picardy and Leith Street construction goes ahead far in advance of approval of the relevant TROs/RSOs, whilst minor AT schemes apparently cannot begin till such Orders are passed!

PROJECT DELAYS

There have already been delays of *several years* in major projects including, amongst others, ...

- **Meadows to Canal** [dating from 2013] - this is a huge source of frustration, being perhaps the most important single 'missing link' and with the Meadows-Innocent link opened 2 years ago
- **Roseburn to Canal** [dating from 2014] – a vital missing link, albeit costly
- **Onstreet bike storage** [dating from 2011] - the pilot (which itself was seriously late) was very successful and shows high demand from people living in tenement areas, where cycle ownership is currently suppressed. As we have often pointed out, several London Boroughs run a combined and [very impressive scheme](#) managed by CycleHoop, thus minimising any demand on Council staff. If Edinburgh's scheme is still on hold, could it be passed to TfE *as a priority action*, since they seem to be progressing effectively on the previously much delayed bike share project, and they appear to be more geared up to working with an outside operator (such as CycleHoop).
- **Marchmont to KB** [dating from 2014]
- **Fountainbridge cycle lanes** [long promised but not yet even consulted on] – a badly needed alternative to the overcrowded inner canal towpath for some users, and where a series of building developments are progressing with, apparently, no clear Fountainbridge cyclist route strategy.
- **Allowing 2-way cycling in 1-way streets** [a commitment since 2010 in the first Cycling (now AT) Action Plan] We understand a draft report has been available for some time, but has not been published or acted on. These measures could make many trips shorter/ safer/ pleasanter.
- **Arterial roads** The 2016 ATAP contains a commitment to *“Review provision for cyclists on key sections of main road during 2016. This includes parking and loading restrictions and options for segregation from motor traffic.”* As far as we know, this has not been commenced, and yet it is an issue for which demand is very strong given that main roads tend to be the most direct and least hilly for many journeys.

Now, as mentioned above, we hear of the following projects, consulted on in 2016/7, also being put on hold or seriously delayed (albeit there are a few other 2016/7 schemes not mentioned in the letters, and which we hope are still on track for construction this year).

- Holyrood Park Road - Ratcliffe Terrace (gives access to Commonwealth Pool, Innocent path, Holyrood Park, and student route Pollock Halls to KB)
- Meadows - Castle Terrace (for many people, an alternative to unpleasant Lothian Road)
- Inverleith Place
- Carrington Road
- Easter Road
- Gilmerton Road / Niddrie House Avenue
- McDonald Road

In conclusion we urge you to look into this matter and identify and attempt to resolve the problems which are causing delays. We look forward to hearing from you on this.

Yours sincerely

Dave du Feu
for Spokes