

Edinburgh City Centre Transformation

Spokes Deputation to Full Council 19th September 2019

Good morning, I am Martin McDonnell And this is Chris Paton We are volunteers for Spokes - the Lothian Cycle Campaign.

Spokes is hugely supportive of the proposed Edinburgh City Centre Transformation.

We support the submission by Living Streets Edinburgh with whom we had hoped to make a joint representation but they were unable to be present at this time so you should have received a written submission from them.

We applaud the Council's boldness and ambition in taking this programme forwards and we are excited that it is now ready for approval. The programme is set to revolutionise the City Centre and make it a place for people, that Edinburgh can truly be proud of. It promises to substantially reduce traffic, improve city-centre cycle routes and enable more people to feel confident cycling for everyday journeys across Edinburgh. To this end, we commend the Council's determined leadership so far. However, it is essential that this continues so that the full programme is progressed swiftly.

There are of course details we want more clarity on, and issues that merit further consideration – for example:

- key roads like Morrison Street where the strategy shows cycleways as possibilities, not definite.
- The West End junction, where student Zhi Min Soh was killed, was originally going to be included in the tramline safety measures programme, but it was put off until the Transformation. Tramline injuries have continued at the junction, so it must now be made a very high priority.
- Remodelling of Lothian Road should be given higher priority in the transformation programme. Spokes counts show that about 20% of citybound vehicles in the rush hour are bikes, even in the current hostile environment, and it is a wide road

connecting a cycling hotspot, residential area of south central Edinburgh to the city centre. The Transformation contained an artists impression of the stretch beside Festival Square, and we need to see that on the ground asap.

- But we recognise that this strategy conveys a 10 year programme. The important thing is to commit to the strategy so that we can all press on with the details over the coming months and years.

We recognise that there's been a huge amount of work by officers, including extensive public consultations. Our particular thanks to Daisy Narayanan, Cllr Macinnes, and their teams for leading the process. We also thank them for speaking and discussing the ideas at two Spokes Public Meetings.

Many cities in the UK and around the world have realised that traffic was strangling their city centres and have now prioritised people over vehicles, especially where there is an "old town". We can follow their example and soon catch up with the likes of Oslo, Seville, Ljubljana - even Glasgow is pushing ahead with pedestrianising streets and putting in segregated cycleways through its Avenues project, on Sauchiehall Street for example.

(Key Points):

- From the Consultation it is clear that Edinburgh wants Transformation. Not simply documents-on-a-shelf plans or business as usual progress - but a giant step. Half-measures or progressing only a few of the ideas will not reap anything like the same benefits that a comprehensive set of measures throughout the City will achieve. This is why we will be pressing for cycleroutes on several roads which are currently only shown as possibles.
- With the advent of eBikes, many more people will have the opportunity to cycle and Edinburgh's sometimes challenging topography will be less of a problem, as councillors such as Cllrs Macinnes and Brown have already discovered!
- Proposals for more flexible deliveries and for redistribution centres will be supported by a great increase in the use of Cargo Bikes.
- Families are taking to their bikes more and more with all kinds of combinations of bikes, from tag-alongs to cargo bikes that can carry several children. Bringing high quality

cycle facilities and cheap and easy access to bicycles to all parts of the City will encourage disadvantaged people to enjoy the benefits of cycling

- We look forward to rapid implementation of secure on-street cycle storage for tenement dwellers and this, together with an extensive programme of daytime cycle parking, will further increase the attraction of owning and using a bike.
- The development of a cycling **network** that is suitable for cyclists of all ages and abilities is vital - not a route by route approach with gaps - but joined-up cycleways and people-friendly streets, that connect peoples homes to their destinations in a comprehensive, direct, convenient and comfortable manner, will enable people to live in a more healthy, economical and environmentally-friendly manner.
- We particularly urge rapid action to reduce vehicle traffic in the city centre (and indeed across the city) to free up space for walking and cycling, reduce air pollution, and help tackle the climate emergency. Air pollution negatively impacts Edinburgh's residents and visitors today, and time is running critically short to stop irreversible climate change – there is no time for delay on either front.

Spokes celebrated 10 decades of cycle campaigning in 2017 and as part of our celebrations we published a vision of the next decade. The City Centre Transformation programme will deliver much of this vision, but there is more that should be done within the 10 year programme, including a denser cycling network, so that people can eventually get from door to door on safe streets. We hope that the Council will be bolder, will look for opportunities to do more and that as the programme progresses, it's capacity to deliver will increase.

Spokes strongly supports this programme and we encourage the council to speed up delivery and to extend the programme across the whole of the city. I will now hand over to Chris to conclude our deputation.

Chris's piece [3'15]

I think Martin has summed up the Spokes position well. I'm very mindful of your time and so I just want to say a few words about why I came along to support this.



Should say that I'm taking the morning off work, my wife is 38 weeks pregnant, our toddler isn't at nursery today – so believe me when I say that I really have made an effort to be here! But when the opportunity came up to speak, I knew I had to come along.

[My story] At the encouragement of my Dad, I've been cycling on Edinburgh's roads since I was about 10 – much to my Mum's dismay I think. I've grown up used to cycling amongst traffic. I was the oddball – the only one – who cycled to school in 5th and 6th year. I certainly never thought about “active travel” or “cycling for all ages and abilities”.

It was a combination of settling down, thinking about a family, and also travelling, that really made me start to think more deeply about my city, our city, and what I want it to be like. And I realised that I have never visited another place and thought “this would be better with more cars”. And certainly a visit to Amsterdam totally changed how I thought about cycling as a means of transport for the many, not the few.

So I joined Spokes in 2016 and learned about what Edinburgh was doing. Initially I was quite angry, “why isn't the stupid council doing more?”. But when I dived deeper I realised that many officers really got the need for change, and indeed I know many of you do too. But it felt like the missing piece was an ambitious, aspirational programme for change – something to galvanise, excite, and inspire. Not just the public, but the council itself.

And so that's why I'm here. Because Transformation is that project. These are the sorts of plans I dreamed about when joining Spokes, and never really believed would actually happen. “Edinburgh would never get its act together; the Council doesn't have any ambition”. I was wrong – you really do!

So while there's details to consider, funding to apply for, plenty still to work out. I urge you to support the full programme of work. There will be challenges of course, but this is a generation defining project that benefits not just cyclists but everybody who lives, works, and visits the city centre. This is one you will all be able to look back proudly on and Edinburgh's citizens will be thankful to you.